

WHO ARE FASHION BRAND FANS? AN INVESTIGATION OF ANTECEDENTS
AND OUTCOMES OF BRAND COMMITMENT

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Abstract

A model was developed to test the concept of fanaticism within the context of a fashion brand. Specifically, the research objectives of this research were to investigate 1) whether individual attributes (i.e., need to belong, materialism) and brand-related attributes (i.e., brand consciousness brand engagement in self-concept, relationship investment) were related to a fan's commitment to a fashion brand, and 2) whether a fan's commitment to a fashion brand was related to related behavioral outcomes (i.e., behavioral loyalty, consumer advocacy intention, personal obligation, and willingness to pay premium prices for a brand).

Data was collected from panel members (n = 418) obtained from a marketing research company who self-identified as fans of a specific fashion brand. An online self-administered survey methodology was employed. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses reflected in the model.

Participants who indicated they had strong desire for belonging indicated they were also materialistic, but their desire for belonging was not related to brand consciousness and brand engagement in self-concept. Participants who were high in materialism were conscious of fashion brands and strongly agreed that their sense of self was linked to the fashion brand that was the object of their fandom. Participants who were brand conscious also indicated that a fashion brand was an important part of their self-concept and invested resources (e.g., time, effort, money) to keep their relationship with this fashion brand. Participants also tended to invest resources for a brand to keep their relationships with a fashion brand when they reported a strong connection between a fashion brand and their self-concept.

Participants who invested resources in a fashion brand were highly committed to the brand. Brand commitment was found to be positively related to behavioral outcomes investigated: behavioral loyalty, willingness to pay premium prices for a brand, advocacy intention, and personal obligation.

Discussion of the findings, theoretical and practical implications, and limitations and suggestions for future research were provided based on the findings.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter one begins with a general background on consumer devotion as the highest level of brand loyalty and on the concept of fanaticism as it relates to consumer devotion. The sections following address the purpose of the study and the significance of the study.

Background

The retail climate within the US is highly competitive. There is tough competition for consumers' dollars and retailers continue to struggle with attracting and more importantly, earning consumers' loyalty. Establishing and maintaining a loyal relationship between brands and consumers is a goal that all retailers and manufacturers strive for because loyal consumers are the most profitable for retailers and manufacturers (Light, 1994).

What exactly is brand loyalty? Early researchers focused on the behavioral aspects of brand loyalty in their definitions (e.g., Cunningham, 1956; Kahn, Kalwani, & Morrison, 1986; Jacoby, 1971; Massey, Montgomery, & Morrison, 1970). For example, loyalty was measured by the proportion of a purchase, that is, by calculating the percentage of the total amount of money spent on a particular brand out of total possible spending (e.g., Cunningham, 1956). However, Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) criticized behavioral approaches that did not capture the factors that motivated repeat purchases. Behavioral approaches only took into account the outcome (i.e., repeated purchase behavior). Thus, behavioral measures alone could not explain the how or why consumers became or remained brand loyal.

Kahn and Louie (1990) reasoned that loyal customers are satisfied customers. If consumers are satisfied with the brand, their satisfaction reinforces their repeat purchase behavior and hence their loyalty to the brand. Satisfaction with a brand can be the result of numerous situational factors including how convenient it is to shop with that brand, the quality of the product, or the price of a product. Loyalty based on these types of factors can quickly end when or if consumers find an alternative brand or product that provides increased convenience, better quality, or a better price.

Subsequently, Oliver (1999) suggested that consumers' loyalty was not entirely explained by their satisfaction. Oliver (1999, p.392) defined loyalty as a "deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future." According to this definition, consumers that are loyal engage in repetitive purchase behavior of the same brand(s) because of their commitment (i.e., attitude) and despite situational influences and/or competitors' marketing efforts.

In addition to behavioral and attitudinal components of loyalty, researchers have suggested that strong emotional relationships are important drivers of loyalty (Fournier, 1998; Oliver, 1999). Connections between objects and consumers often go beyond meeting simple functional needs and the commercial value of the object (McCracken, 1986). One aspect of an emotional relationship is the extent to which a consumer views an object as an important contributor to his or her sense of self (Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Consumers who are emotionally connected, attached, and involved with the brand can identify their "self" so deeply with the brand that they engage in loyal

behaviors. For fashion¹ products in particular, consumers' emotional experience with the brand can be more important than other functional qualities because the aesthetic value of clothing (i.e., design, color, textures, personal taste) goes beyond functional value.

Consumers can present and maintain their sense of self through wearing the clothing items and brands that they like. Thus, manufacturers and retailers that provide consumers with self-reflective branded products (e.g., apparel, accessories) might garner more emotional loyalty than retailers and manufacturers that provide branded commodities (e.g., gasoline, flour, bleach).

Strong emotional bonds between consumers and brands lead consumers to be involved, committed, and dedicated to brands (Fournier, 1998). Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) used the term consumer devotion to describe this intense level of loyalty to brands. These involved and committed consumers exhibit an intense level of loyalty behavior that remains regardless of the brand's performance and/or situational influences (Oliver, 1999).

Consumer Devotion/Fanaticism

In consumer behavior research, several researchers have suggested consumer devotion is a concept that can be understood by examining the behavior of fans and the concept of fanaticism (Chung, Farrelly, Beverland, & Quester, 2008; Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). The term "extraordinary" and "excessive" are key terms to define fanaticism, a term used to describe individuals that go beyond the typical, usual, or average level (Taylor, 1991).

¹ Fashion products include apparel, shoes, accessories, and cosmetics.

Consumer fanaticism in marketing literature has been presented as both a negative behavior as well as a positive behavior. For example, Redden and Steiner (2000) represent the negative side as they viewed fanaticism as consisting of enthusiasm, zeal, excess, and intolerance. They proposed that fanatics are at the end of a fanaticism continuum of intensity, enthusiasm, and intolerance, thus, become “inappropriate”, “exaggerated”, or “frenzied” about the object of their attention and behavior.

Researchers who approach fanaticism in a positive light view fanatics as being a normal, usual, cultural, and social phenomenon that can occur in everyday life (Chung et al., 2008; Hunt et al., 1999; Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007; 2008; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004; Thorne & Bruner, 2006). Thorne and Bruner (2006, p. 53) defined fanaticism as “the degree of intensity to which one is a fan, with the level of involvement varying from low to high intensity.” Fans were defined as “individuals who overwhelmingly liked a particular object such as a person, group, or trend.” Fandom was defined as a subculture of fans. These researchers considered fans as being not excessive and as not violating social norms. They proposed the term fanatics be used to describe individuals who sometimes violated social norms or were dysfunctional.

Complicating the discussion of fans and fanatics is the fact that some researchers have used the term ‘fan’ as a synonym for ‘fanatic’, a term they used to describe an individual who has extraordinary devotion (Chung et al., 2008; Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007). Therefore, in this study, the term ‘fan’ is used as a term encompassing different levels of fanaticism relative to a brand. ‘Fanatics’ as a term is used to indicate individuals that have an extremely high level of fanaticism. Thus, fanatics are fans who are extremely devoted to their favorite brand. Applied to the concept of brand, brand fans are

consumers that demonstrate a brand loyalty that is affective-driven and emotion-laden. Similarly, an individual's level of fanaticism relative to a brand is reflected in how emotionally attached, involved, committed, and dedicated a person is to a brand (Chung et al., 2008).

Understanding fanatic consumers and their behavior toward brands is important because these consumers are unique in that their interest in a brand is self-sustaining (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004) and they are the consumer group that exhibits the ultimate level of brand loyalty, that is, consumer devotion. Consumers that are fanatics of a brand voluntarily put forth efforts to maintain relationships with the brands that they are devoted to and engage in behaviors beneficial to these brands. Fanatics, the most passionate level of dedication, also show a deep love for the brand (Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999; Redden & Steiner, 2000). For example, fanatics create positive word of mouth about their brands and are voluntary advocates for their brands (Fournier, 1998; Fournier & Yao, 1997; Pimental & Reynolds, 2004; Rozanski, Baum, & Wolfsen, 1999). They often try to persuade and convince others to adopt the objects of their devotion (Belk & Tumbat, 2005; Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

Previous researchers interested in the consumer behavior of fans focused their research efforts on understanding the characteristics of these consumers as well as the behaviors that these fans engaged in (Chung et al., 2008; Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999; Smith, Fisher, & Cole, 2007; Thorne & Bruner, 2006). The results of their preliminary research have revealed several proposed relationships that have not been tested on a large scale with diverse individuals. In addition, what drives consumers to become a fan of a

brand and identifying outcomes of being a brand fan is unknown. Therefore, this study was designed to further understand the concept of fanaticism as it relates to building and maintaining consumer's brand loyalty by identifying antecedents and outcomes associated with being a fanatic consumer of a brand. Based on theoretical frameworks proposed by several researchers (e.g., Fullerton, 2003; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004), a comprehensive model that proposes antecedents and outcomes of brand commitment as well as explains the behaviors of brand fans within a fashion brand context was developed. Specifically, the research objectives were to investigate 1) whether individual attributes (i.e., need to belong, materialism) and brand-related attributes (i.e., brand consciousness, brand engagement in self-concept, relationship investment) were related to a fan's commitment to a fashion brand, and 2) whether a fan's commitment to a fashion brand was related to behavioral outcomes (i.e., behavioral loyalty, consumer advocacy intention, personal obligation, and willingness to pay premium prices for a brand).

Significance of the Study

This research resulted in both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, additional information relative to understanding of the behavior of fans of fashion brands and how this contributes to brand loyalty was provided. A theoretically grounded model to explain the process of brand loyalty was developed.

Several researchers have conceptualized brand fans by extending the context from sports fans to a consumption context (Chung et al., 2008; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004; Pitchler & Hemetsberger, 2007). An explanatory model of the antecedents and outcomes of being a brand fan contributes to the loyalty literature by providing an explanation of

how the intense level of brand loyalty can be formed and maintained through scrutinizing the behaviors of brand fans. The model also provides an explanation of whether consumers become brand fanatics due to unique personal characteristics which is outside the control of brand managers or due to the relationships between consumers and brands which is within the control of brand managers.

Findings from the research provide practical suggestions to marketers and retailers interested in moving their customers from a shallow level of brand loyalty to a deeper level reflected in the behavior of brand fans. Brand fanatics present the ultimate level of loyalty behaviors. Therefore, it is important for retailers to understand what factors motivate consumers to be a brand fanatic and how those brand fanatics relate to the brand. Understanding fanatics will help marketers develop improved relationships with their customers and inform loyalty programs and other efforts designed to enrich their customers' experiences.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two provides the literature review. The literature review consists of the theoretical background for the research and a review of related studies. Hypotheses, developed from the theoretical background and the literature review, are also presented.

Theoretical Background

Consumer Commitment

Researchers in the area of organizational behavior have focused their attention on the concept of commitment to examine employee dedication or loyalty to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Allen and Meyer (1990) conceptualized three components of organizational commitment; continuance commitment, normative commitment, and affective commitment. In consumer behavior and marketing literature, researchers have also applied the concept of commitment in their attempts to understand loyalty (Amine, 1998; Story & Hess, 2006). In this study, commitment was defined as “the intention to behave in a manner supportive of relationship longevity” (Fournier, 1998, p. 365).

Continuance commitment. Continuance commitment refers to an individuals’ perceived cost of leaving the organization versus the perceived benefits from remaining in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Continuance commitment is based on an individual’s investment into the organization (i.e., time, effort, cost) and the perceived lack of alternatives (Allen & Meyer). For example, if an individual spent a significant amount of time and effort to be trained in a profession or had acquired certain job skills, it could be hard for him/her to be transferred to another organization. In addition, if there

are few options for alternative organizations to be transferred to, that might increase the perceived cost of leaving an organization. Applying the concept of continuance commitment to brand loyalty, consumers demonstrating continuance commitment would stay loyal to a brand because they perceive more benefits from remaining loyal to the brand than from leaving the brand. They would also stay with the brand if there were a lack of available alternatives that could provide better service or quality of merchandise. Researchers in consumer behavior research have used the term “calculative” to describe this type of commitment (Hansen, Sandvik, & Selnes, 2002; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). Therefore, to maintain consistency the term ‘calculative’ commitment is used to describe ‘continuance’ commitment.

Normative commitment. Normative commitment is related to ideas about the moral or right thing to do. Normative commitment is influenced by an individual’s previous experiences relative to the organization (i.e., family member worked in the organization, other important people value the organization) and past experiences. For example, if an individual was employed for a long time by the organization she or he may feel somewhat faithful to that organization for a variety of reasons. Perhaps he or she is loyal because of the history of the relationship. Perhaps the organization hired her or him when other organizations did not, did not lay him or her off when similar others were laid off, or because other family members worked at the organization. That individual could be normatively committed to the organization because he or she might feel that being loyal to the organization is the right thing to do. Applied to brand loyalty, consumers who are normatively committed to a brand might be so because of the influence of history and of significant others’ (e.g., family members). For example, individuals might become

normatively committed to the brands that they grew up with or the brands that are well-liked by older or other family members. For example, if an individual has a family where members have always purchased Harley Davidson motorcycles, that individual may be normatively committed to that brand because of the family history with that brand. Consumers can also experience normative commitment to brands they have simply experienced in the past. For example, adults can be normatively committed to a brand of toothpaste that they used as a child.

Affective Commitment. Affective commitment is defined as “affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p.2). Personal characteristics, job characteristics, work experiences, and structural characteristics have been suggested as factors influencing affective commitment. For example, individuals can become loyal to an organization because they feel comfortable with the job position, tasks, and people who they are working with. Individuals can remain affectively committed when their psychological needs are satisfied in the organization. Similarly, consumers can be affectively committed to a brand if they are emotionally connected and attached to the brand. Applied to brand loyalty, if you were affectively committed to a brand, you would be loyal because you had an emotional connection, attachment, and even love for the brand.

A high level of affective or emotional commitment toward a brand also signifies a dedicated brand relationship. Fournier (1994) in her study of how relationships are formed with brands found informants expressed emotional commitment in the form of statements such as “I am very loyal to that brand” and “I would never buy any other

brand besides that.” In addition, they showed a strong intention to an investment-related commitment as characterized by the following statement of one informant: “when you are loyal to a brand, you stick by it. It is like having a backbone.” Consumers in a dedicated brand relationship perceive deep levels of intimacy and durable bonds with brands. These bonds are based in their beliefs about the brand.

Consumers’ beliefs about brands can be based in the functional performance of the brand (e.g., brand’s performance is superior to other brands). Consumer beliefs about brands can also include the extent to which they identify themselves with brands and perceive the brand as a part of and even an extension of the self (Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2003). For example, when we view a brand as part of the extended self we view the brand as part of who we are. Unlike the consumer who experiences continuance commitment or the consumer who experiences normative commitment, the affectively committed consumers are dedicated to their brands regardless of the balance of costs and benefits of their loyalty or the expectations of others.

Commitment in Relationship Marketing

Commitment has been studied as a key construct of consumer-brand relationships. Researchers in relationship marketing have examined the influence of these different commitment constructs on customers’ perceptions and behavioral intentions concerning brands in service contexts including banking and cell phone service providers (Fullerton, 2003; Hansen, Sandvik, & Selnes, 2002). For example, Fullerton (2003) in his examination of cell phone service providers found committed customers tended to demonstrate less switching intentions than consumers who were not committed. Affectively-committed consumers were more likely to remain loyal than continuance-

committed consumers. Consumers who were affectively committed were also more likely to be advocates for the brand as compared to continuance-committed consumers. Both affective and continuance-committed consumers were willing to pay more for a service than non-committed consumers.

Trust-based Commitment Model. Story and Hess (2006) proposed a Trust-Based Commitment Model to explain consumer loyalty based on the consumer-brand relationship segments they developed (see Figure 1 for a diagram of the model.). These researchers theorized that it was trust in a brand that was the differentiator between different groups of satisfied customers and different levels of loyalty. They proposed that satisfaction with a brand (i.e., satisfaction with value, convenience, performance) led to a functional connection between consumers and brands. These functional connections over time contributed to trust. If brands continued to perform appropriately, satisfaction and trust led to personal connections with the brand. These personal connections consisted not only of trust in the brand but also of emotional ties to the brand.

Story and Hess's (2006) consumer-brand relationship segments were determined based on these two types of connections: functional and personal. Individuals who were low in both personal and functional connections were labeled as having no connection to a brand (i.e., disconnected). These individuals engaged in frequent brand switching and demonstrated neither attitudinal nor behavioral loyalty. Satisfaction was not a motivation for their choices in a particular product category. Any perceived loyal behaviors result from external constraints rather than any relationship to the brand.

Individuals who were high in both personal and functional connections were labeled as having a committed relationship to a brand. These individuals were satisfied

with the products associated with the brand as well as likely to demonstrate strong loyal behaviors relative to the brand. They were both behaviorally loyal as well as attitudinally loyal. They demonstrated sustained loyal behaviors relative to the brand.

Individuals who were high in either personal or functional connections were labeled as having a personal or functional relationship to a brand, respectively. A personal relationship to a brand was characterized as liking for the brand as a result of brand motives or because the brand was used in self-definitions. This group may demonstrate loyal behaviors but their loyalty is based in attitude rather than functional outcomes. While they may not be inclined to switch to other brands, they may switch if another brand offered higher functional value than the one they were currently using. A functional relationship to a brand was characterized as liking the brand because, as noted earlier, one was satisfied with value, convenience, performance, and other functional attributes of the brand. The loyalty of these consumers was based in their satisfaction. These consumers may switch to other brands if any aspect of the functional attributes of the brand (e.g., price, convenience, performance) was better with a competitive offering.

As noted, to move to a committed relationship to a brand a consumer needed to have both a strong functional and a strong personal connection to a brand. In addition to showing strong loyal behaviors, committed customers are emotionally engaged in sustaining their relationships to the brand. Customers who are satisfied but not committed to the brand may show loyal behaviors such as repurchasing but easily change their mind and switch to another brand whenever it is available (i.e., functional connection). This reasoning is consistent with Amine's (1998) idea that consumers' commitment to a brand could be an important factor that differentiated true loyalty from spurious loyalty.

In the Trust-Based Commitment Model loyalty behaviors are categorized into two types: primary loyalty behaviors and secondary loyalty behaviors. Primary loyalty behaviors are typically measured using purchase-related behaviors such as frequency and volume of purchases. Secondary loyalty behaviors are associated with brand supporting behaviors including making referrals to the brand, endorsements of the brand, and advocacy for the brand.

Story and Hess (2006) conducted an empirical study to test the proposed relationships in their model using 1,988 individuals. Participants were asked to rate two brands that they were at least somewhat familiar with and that they had shopped in the last 30 days to assess which brand-relationship segment best described them: none (disconnected), functional, personal, or committed. After six months, participants rated their attitudes and reported their behaviors relative to the two retail brands. Participants in the committed connection segment reported higher likelihood of engaging in primary loyalty behaviors including a high share of total number of purchases of a brand in a product category, number of times the brand was shopped, willingness to pay premium prices for the brand, and actual money spent on the brand than those in other segments. Participants in personal and functional segments showed a higher tendency to engage in loyalty behaviors than those in the disconnected segment. In addition, participants in the committed segment indicated a higher tendency to engage in secondary loyalty behaviors such as recommending the brand to others, willingness to go out of one's way to visit the brand, and willingness to make purchases of the brand online than those in other segments. Functional and personal commitment segments demonstrated similar loyalty behaviors. However, participants classified into the personal segment showed a higher

tendency for willingness to pay premium prices for the brand than those in the functional segment. This finding demonstrates that the development of a personal brand connection alone (i.e., emotional ties, trust) between brand and consumers can be directly connected to brand sales.

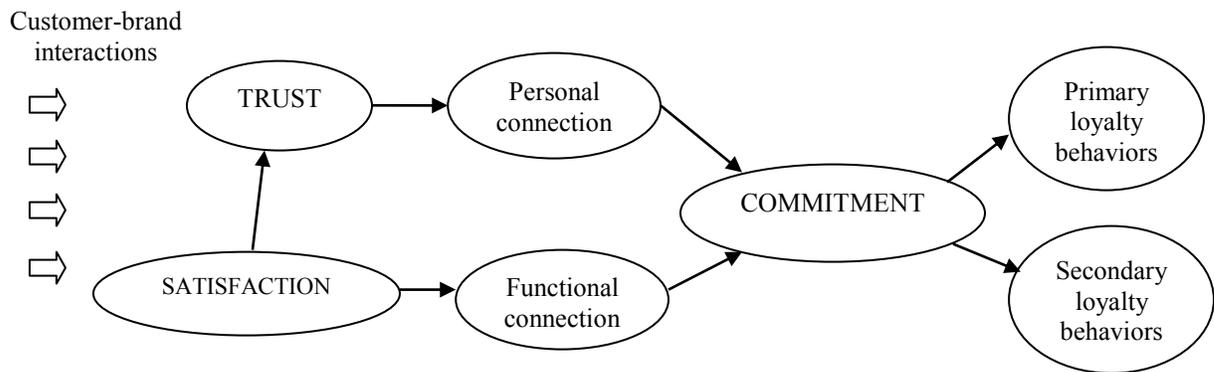


Figure 1. Trust-based commitment model proposed by Story and Hess (2006).

Relationship investment (RI) model. The investment model is a consumer-brand relationship model derived from interdependence theory (Rusbult, 1980). In the interdependency model, there are two sources of dependence: satisfaction with the present relationship partner and the quality of alternatives. The RI model extends the interdependency model by adding two constructs: relationship investment as another source of dependence and commitment as a mediating construct (see Figure 2). Thus, three bases of dependence (i.e., satisfaction, quality of alternatives, investment size) and commitment contribute to relationship stability. Commitment is considered a central motive; it reflects a long-term orientation toward the relationship as well as a tendency

for individuals to remain with their relationship partners (i.e., brands) and maintain their relationships. Satisfaction refers to the degree of positive versus negative feeling toward the brand. Quality of alternatives refers to evaluation of the quality of the brand they are loyal to as compared to the quality of alternative brands. Relationship investment refers to the magnitude and importance of the investment of resources in the relationship (Rusbult, 1980). There are different types of investment including direct resources such as time and money and indirect resources such as mutual friends, personal identity, or shared material possessions (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). For example, consumers may invest time and effort to learn how to use new products. In addition, consumers' investment in their favorite brand (e.g., subscription to a brand's publications) and their purchase of related products (i.e., Apple printer, Apple T-shirts) are examples of relationship investment (Sung & Campbell, 2007). Indirect resources of investment such as positive statements about their brands to friends could reinforce consumers' identities and self-concepts. Thus, according to the RI model, consumers are committed to a brand relationship when they are satisfied with the brand, have few or no alternative brands that offer better quality, and have made significant investments to maintain their relationship.

Researchers have demonstrated strong empirical support for the ability of the RI model to predict consumer-brand relationship ties (Breivik & Thorbjorsen, 2008; Sung & Campbell, 2007). Sung and Campbell (2007) applied the RI model to predict brand relationship commitment through two studies. In study one, sixty four male and sixty seven female students were asked to name any brand that they thought they had a close relationship with and then complete a questionnaire. Next, participants were given specific brand names of one product brand (i.e., Coca-Cola) and one service brand (i.e.,

Bell South) and asked to complete the same questionnaire again. The results showed that the quality of alternatives was negatively associated with brand commitment and satisfaction. Relationship investment was positively related to the level of commitment to the brand with which they indicated they had a close relationship.

Study two was designed to examine a causal relationship between these variables. Hypothetical brands were created to remove any pre-existing relationships that the participants could have with and presented in vignettes using a 2 (satisfaction: high/low) x 2 (alternative: high/low) x 2 (investments: high/low) between-subject experimental design. One hundred seventy students were randomly assigned to one of eight conditions and given three scenarios containing three different relationship scenarios with the hypothetical brands. The results of study two were consistent with those of study one.

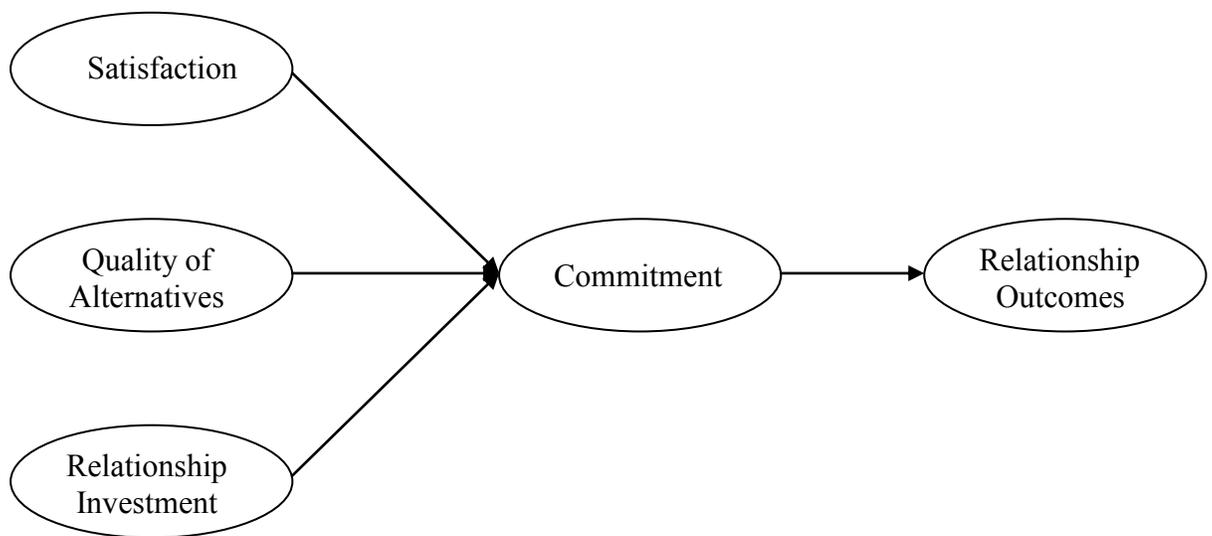


Figure 2. Relationship investment model proposed by Rusbult (1980).

Breivik and Thorbjorsen (2008) also provided support for satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and relationship investment as explanations for brand commitment and consequent brand support. Participants were members of several brand communities and were recruited by posting a questionnaire on different brand communities' bulletin boards. This procedure resulted in a sample of 678 individuals. Based on the RI model, they suggested that commitment worked as a partial mediator rather than as a complete mediator. There were direct and indirect effects for satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and behavioral frequency on brand support and repurchase likelihood as relationship outcomes. Relationship investment had an indirect effect on relationship outcome variables mediated by commitment (see Figure 3).

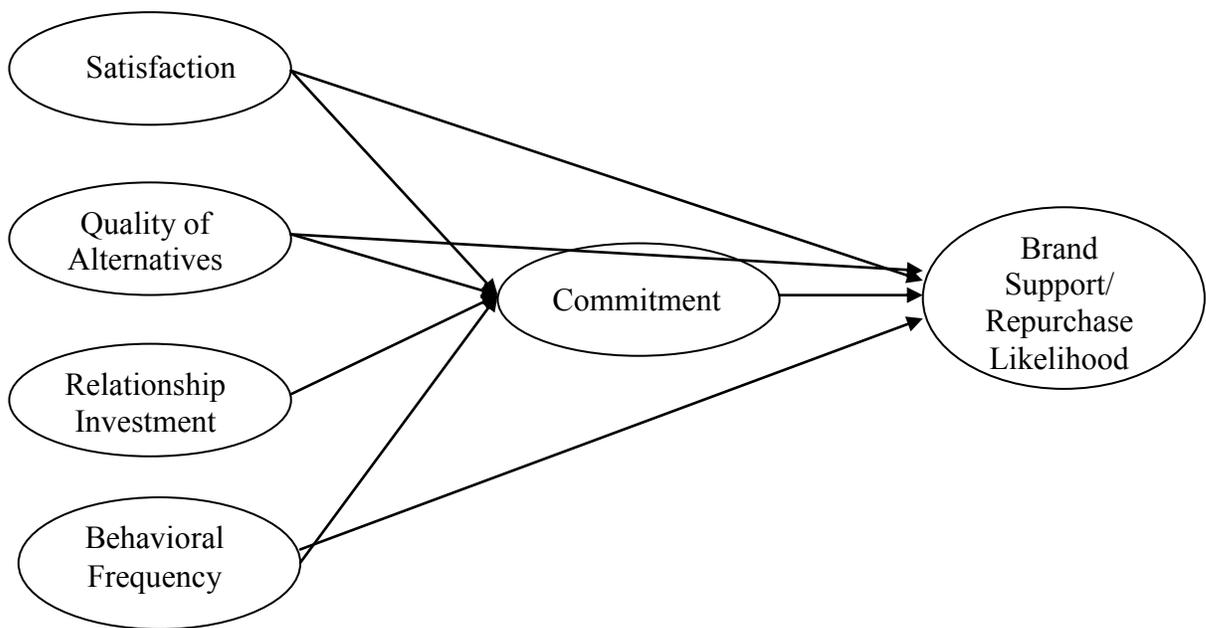


Figure 3. Relationship investment model, partial mediation proposed by Breivik and Thorbjorsen (2008)

A Model for Consumer Devotion

Commitment was identified as a key driver of loyalty in the Story and Hess (2006) Trust-Based commitment model and of consumer-brand relationship in the relationship investment (RI) model. Commitment has also been identified as important to the concept of fanaticism and in explanations of the loyal behavior of fans (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). In Chapter 1 it was noted that fanatics have been described as extremely devoted consumers (Chung et al., 2008). Thus, conceptualizations of consumer devotion may be relevant to explanations of consumer fanaticism and strong loyalty behaviors.

Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) were two of the early researchers who attempted to examine the phenomenon of consumer devotion as a discrete concept (see Figure 4 for a diagram of their model). They proposed a model for consumer devotion based on the behavior of a large group of committed football fans. They have subsequently applied their model to a brand context.

According to the Model for Consumer Commitment (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004), there are several antecedents to commitment and commitment motivates specific behaviors that lead to devotion. Using the commitment segments developed earlier by Allen and Meyer (1990), Pimentel and Reynolds proposed that norms, a felt void, a need to belong, a need for distinction, and a need to define or enhance identities were antecedents of commitment. Pimentel and Reynolds noted that a condition of unfulfilled needs created a state of cognitive inconsistency. Thus, attaining cognitive consistency could also be an underlying motivation that assisted individuals in developing their commitment (Heider, 1958). For example, if supporting a specific football team is the family norm, an individual family member who does not support that team may

experience cognitive inconsistency. To obtain consistency, the individual must become a fan of the team. Thus, desire for cognitive consistency with the family norm of being a fan and self as a family member could motivate commitment.

Individuals can also become committed to a team to fill a felt void. If individuals feel something is missing in their lives, they may become committed to a team to compensate for what is missing. Individuals may experience a void in their identities that commitment could fulfill. For example, if you desired to be a parent but were unable to have children, you could become a fan of a team and fulfill your parenting identity. Part of your fan behaviors could include parenting behaviors such as watching the team practice, watching games, and providing other forms of moral support by participating in booster clubs.

Individuals can become fans of a team because of a need to belong to a group and need for distinction (uniqueness). The need for affiliation is a fundamental psychological need (e.g., Maslow, 1970; McClelland, 1987) that can lead individuals to become committed to a team. For example, individuals may become committed to a team because they enjoy interacting with other fans and they perceive something in common with them. In addition to fulfilling a desire for belonging, individuals are also motivated to be committed to a team due to their desire for distinction (Birrell, 1981). For example, individuals may choose a less popular team to be a fan of rather than a team that many people are fans of because doing so fills a need for uniqueness.

When this model was extended to a brand context, Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) proposed that consumers may develop commitment to a brand due to the functional and hedonic benefits offered by a brand (i.e., good value for money, satisfactory performance,

pleasure, fun). While other antecedents were concerned with an individual's personal needs, functional and hedonic benefits are antecedents perceived by individuals based on their experience with the brand.

According to their Model of Consumer Commitment, antecedents lead fans to experience either calculative² or normative commitment. Calculatively or normatively committed fans could also experience affective commitment through a sacralization process. The sacralization process involves the experience of a transcendent event or a quintessence. These events are generally emotional and exciting (e.g., the ability to meet your favorite celebrity in person). Fans who move into affective commitment often describe their fandom as religious and use religious terms such as "conversion" and "saint" when they explain their experiences (Kozinets, 2001). The sacralization process can include nostalgic aspects like continuing to eat the brand of peanut butter your favorite grandfather enjoyed. The process is also similar to taking on a family norm (e.g., like the location of where Thanksgiving will be celebrated each year) but with greater intensity.

If fans that are affectively committed to a brand lose this sacred feeling about a brand, desacralization occurs. Commitment may atrophy. Additionally, if an individual has calculative or normative commitment, both types of commitment may atrophy if an individual fails to go through the sacralization process.

Affectively committed fans become devoted fans through engaging in proactive-sustained behaviors. These behaviors include engaging in rituals, building shrines, collecting items representing their fandom, recruiting fans, and making pilgrimages. For

²The original term used by Allen and Meyer (1990) to describe this segment was continuance commitment.

example, committed fans may consider involvement with the team and games as ongoing rituals. They may engage in some ritual behaviors themselves such as wearing a team t-shirt on the day the team has a game regardless of whether they are attending the game. They may also maintain shrines to honor their teams through, for example, dedicating a room of their home to their team and featuring items representing the team (e.g., chairs, dishes, wall coverings, cups, photographs of their favorite players, signed memorabilia). These behaviors can serve to maintain and strengthen their identity as a member of a group of fans. Committed fans also engage in display and collecting behavior related to their teams by investing money, time, and effort (i.e., creating a website for their team), sharing their knowledge with others, and recruiting others to become fans. Sometimes fans sacrifice themselves to support their teams and watch games. Pimentel and Reynolds proposed that devoted fans are expected to support their teams in any situation regardless of their team's performance. Similarly, devoted fans of brands would support their brand regardless of the brand's performance.

In subsequent work, Pichler and Hemetsberger (2007) extended the conceptualization of consumer devotion by building on Pimentel and Reynolds' (2004) work. Pichler and Hemetsberger (2007; 2008) approached consumer devotion from the perspective of the individual. They reasoned that individuals can form strong emotional relationships with objects (Bowlby, 1973) and even develop an "object-love" (Ahuvia, 2005). Individuals' strong emotional states can also lead them to become devotees. They theorized that devotion encompasses love, passion, intimacy, and dedication. Devoted individuals are willing to invest their time, money, and energy to maintain relationships with their loved object. Further, devotees' emotional state and their behaviors and efforts

to maintain their relationships with their loved object are associated with maintaining and achieving self-identity and self-realization.

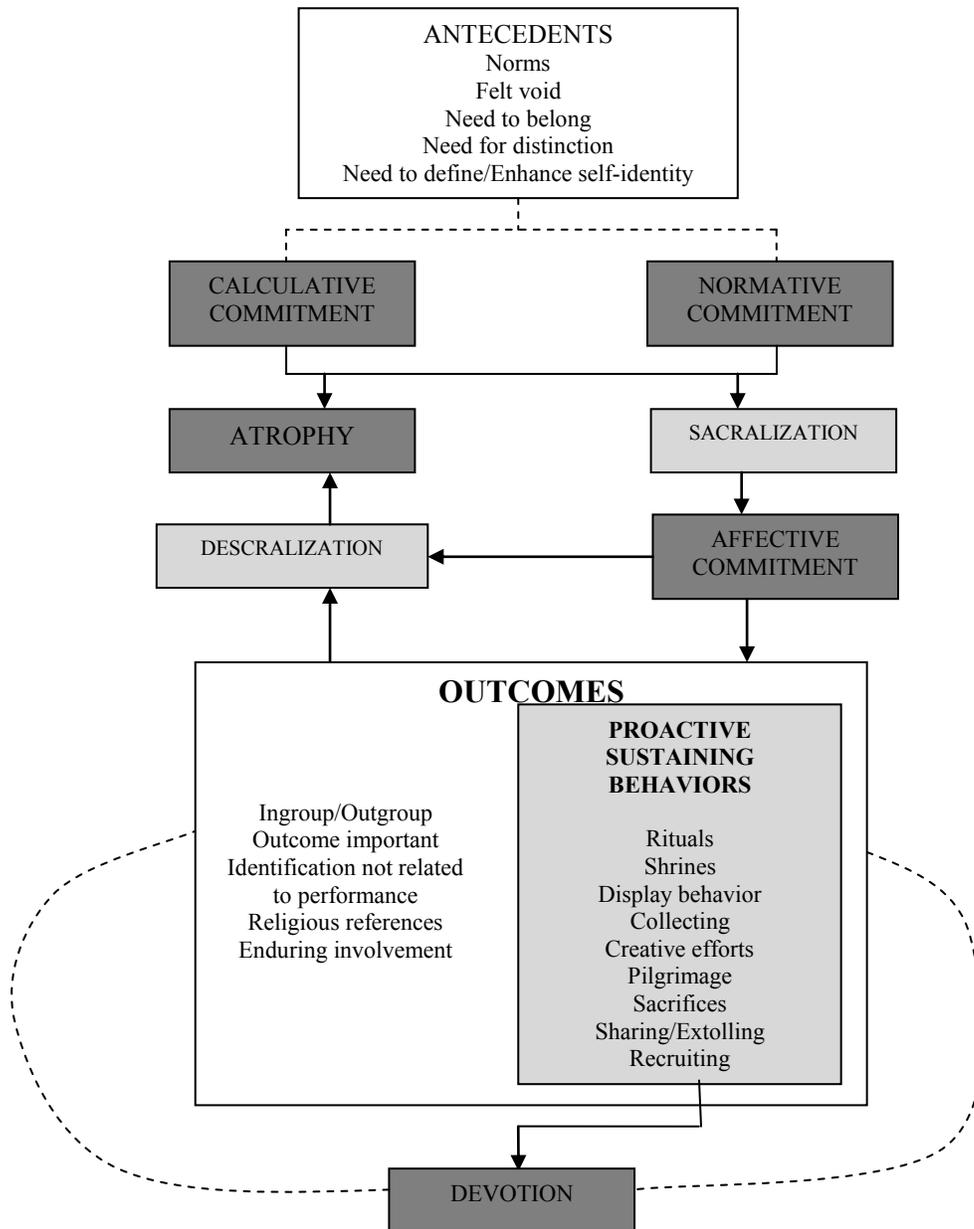


Figure 4. A model for consumer commitment by Pimentel and Reynolds (2004).

Fanaticism in the Context of Sports

As noted earlier, fanaticism relative to a brand is reflected in how emotionally attached, involved, committed, and dedicated a person is to a brand (Chung et al, 2008). Thus, commitment is a component of the behavior of fans. Although applying the concept of fanaticism is relatively new to explanations of consumer/brand loyalty, it is a phenomenon that has been often discussed and examined in other disciplines including sports sociology, social psychology, politics, philosophy, and religion (e.g., Passmore, 2003). The concept of fanaticism also has been applied to a variety of consumption contexts including motorcycles (e.g., Harley-Davidson), automobiles (e.g., Saturn, Volkswagen Beetle), food and beverages (e.g., Coke), apparel (e.g., Nike, Levi's), sports (e.g., football, baseball), science fiction programs (e.g., Star Trek, X-File), music (e.g., jazz), and celebrities (e.g., Michael Jordan) (e.g., Fournier & Yao, 1997; Holbrook, 1987; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004; Redden & Steiner, 2000; Rozanski, Baum, & Wolfsen, 1999). Most applicable is the research on the behavior of sports fans.

Researchers interested in the behavior of sports fans have noted that not all fans engage in the same level of commitment, emotional involvement, or devotion to their teams (Hunt, Bristol, & Babshaw, 1999; Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997). These researchers developed conceptually-based classifications of sports fans based on commitment and emotional involvement as well as motives, behavior, and benefits of being a fan. For example, Sutton et al. (1997) suggested that the commitment and emotional attachment of an individual to their team could be identified by placing that individual on a fan identification continuum. Sutton et al. (1997) proposed three different levels of fan identification; low identification, medium identification, and high

identification. Fans characterized as low in identification were described as passive in their relationship with the sport. Their fan identification may be derived from the pure pleasure or entertainment value that they get from enjoying sporting events and engaging in social interaction about the sport within the community. The researchers labeled individuals with this level of fan identification as social fans. Social fans are attracted by the sporting events or fan activities but not by the team itself. These fans are not emotionally attached to their teams.

Fans characterized as medium in identification were described as attracted by team performance, key players, or social factors. They are high-achievement-seeking and focused fans, thus their fandom is directly related to their team's performance. They may show short-term emotional attachment to their team and be attracted by events such as the All Star Game. They will purchase tickets for the big games. However, their emotional attachment may terminate when the team loses games or a key player is traded from the team.

The highest identification level is the vested fan. Vested fans have the strongest and longest term relationship with their sports teams. They are highly committed and emotionally attached to their teams and show their loyalty to the team regardless of the team's performance. These fans are willing to spend significant amounts of money and time for their team. Sutton et al. (1997) proposed that fans who were highly identified with their teams might be less price sensitive and performance-outcome sensitive than those low in fan identification.

Hunt et al. (1999) in their classification scheme for sports fans focused on motives, behaviors, and benefits. They developed five different types: the temporary fan,

the local fan, the devoted fan, the fanatical fan, and the dysfunctional fan. The motivation of temporary and local fans was situational. For example, social pressures or temporary circumstances can motivate individuals to engage in sports-related behaviors. The motivation of the devoted, fanatical, and dysfunctional fans was enduring. These types of fans related their self-concept to the team or sport object.

Time boundary is another important factor to defining the temporary fan. Temporary fans may become non-fans once the time period of a specific event has expired. For example, a temporary fan of Michael Jordan would show enthusiasm about the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the Chicago Bulls simply because Michael Jordan played basketball for that team within that league. However, after Jordan retired, a temporary fan would show reduced enthusiasm for both.

A local fan is defined by geographic constraints. For example, local fans may become a fan of a regional team because they are born and live in the same location as the home of the team. However, they might change to non-fan status if they move to a new city or state. Temporary and local fans do not view the sport's team as related to their concept of self.

Developing an emotional attachment to the consumptive object is an important turning point that can convert temporary and local fans into devoted fans. If a change in attachment is experienced by either the temporary or local fan, they begin to relate the teams to their self-concept or identity, breaking the boundaries of time and location. Devoted fans remain fans of the team over time and regardless of where they live. This type of fan does not attach their fandom to the teams' performance. They remain fans regardless of whether their team wins or loses.

A fanatical fan is similar to a devoted fan in that they are not bound by time or location and they also define their self through their attachment to the team. The difference between the two types of fan is behavior. Fanatical fans engage in more intense behaviors than do devoted fans. For example, the devoted fan may go to the sporting event, but the fanatical fan may go to the event and paint their face with the team's colors.

The last category of fan is the dysfunctional fan. The dysfunctional fan utilizes being a fan as a means of identifying the self to others and to themselves as well. For the dysfunctional fan, being a fan is very closely linked to the core of the "self." A dysfunctional fan identifies so strongly with being a fan that he or she may forgo other responsibilities (e.g., job, family, friends). This type of fan will engage in activities that are labeled as deviant or disruptive to the event or social exchanges surrounding the event. These behaviors can be violent like over-turning cars or damaging store fronts all in the name of being a fan.

In an empirical study of fan identification Bristow and Sebastian (2001) examined fans of the Chicago Cubs major league baseball team. They found that fans in different levels of fan identification had different levels of loyalty to the team and also showed different fan behaviors. In this study, die-hard Cubs fans (i.e., fanatical fan) indicated that they had watched, listened to, or attended Cubs games more frequently than less loyal Cubs fans. Die-hard Cubs fans also purchased more items of Chicago Cubs paraphernalia, showed higher levels of brand loyalty, and had more baseball knowledge and expertise than less loyal fans. Die-hard fans indicated that they would remain fans regardless of any situational constraints.

In this study, similar to sports fans, it is assumed that brand fans will demonstrate different levels of fanaticism (i.e., commitment, emotional attachment, devotion) relative to their favorite fashion brands. Therefore, consumers in different levels of fanaticism will engage in different types and levels of loyal behavior.

Fanaticism and Other Consumption Contexts

Researchers interested in fanaticism have also studied the concept in non-sports contexts. For example, Thorne and Bruner (2006) examined the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of fans representing a variety of situations. They first identified four characteristics of fanaticism based on a review of existing research. These were internal involvement, desire for external involvement, wish to acquire, and desire for social interaction. They examined whether these characteristics actually existed in fans by interviewing 88 members from three genres: 25 members from Star Trek fandom, 28 members from science fiction fandom, and 35 fans of role-playing games. They found that fans were internally and externally involved in the area of their interest. Fans expressed strong interest and were eager to engage in fan behaviors and spent a significant amount of time engaging in behaviors including visiting multiple websites and having a conversation with friends about their area of interest. Fans also expressed a high desire to acquire items related to their area of interest (i.e., collections) and were highly interested in interacting with other fans in the community or with their friends about their collections. In addition, participants perceived themselves as having different levels of fanaticism (e.g., s being a strong gaming fan, being strongly involved fans). Participants also noted that there may be others who had more intense levels of fanaticism than they did.

In subsequent research, Chung, Beverland, Farrelly, and Quester (2008) conducted interviews to examine the characteristics and qualities of consumer fanaticism. They interviewed five individuals who identified themselves as ‘fanatics’ or self-reported that they had experienced the phenomenon of being ‘fanatic.’ These consumers reported extraordinary loyalty and devotion and extreme enthusiasm for the objects of their fanaticism. Fanatic consumers showed passion, love, emotional attachment, and dedication. They sometimes engaged in compulsive consumption and addiction-like behaviors. For example, one informant noted that she sometimes felt an uncontrollable drive to buy something relative to her fandom just for the purpose of buying even though she did not enjoy the product. Examples of this type of behavior are individuals who are fanatic about Coca Cola and purchase all things Coca Cola (e.g., furniture, cookie jars, kitchen curtains, wall paper) simply because they represent that brand. The consumption of objects can be viewed as a form of addictive behavior as fanatic consumers report that there is no clear goal or clear end point to their consumption. An example of this could be an individual that is fascinated with a professional team and has a large collection of team artifacts. It can be unclear as to the number of items that will complete the collection hence the individual continues to purchase team artifacts (e.g., pins, glasses, eyewear, apparel, seat cushions, blankets, balls, hats, dishes, photos). However, these kinds of behaviors did not necessarily result in severe negative consequences associated with compulsive buying or addictions because they did not interfere with other aspects of daily life. Thus, Chung et al, (2008) concluded that fanaticism was not causing harm to consumers.

Chung et al (2008) also emphasized the experiential aspect of consumption such as fun and enjoyment. Consumption of an experience is sometimes an end in itself for fanatic consumers. The behavior of fanatic consumers can also be sustained by oneself. In other words, unlike other's conceptualization of extreme loyalty as a phenomena that occurs in the context of communities, fanatic consumers can demonstrate their dedication without the support of others. Even though other people may disapprove of the object of their fascination, fanatic consumers maintain their devotion. These findings support other's conceptualizations of fanatics and their behavior (Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007; 2008; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004).

Model Development

The review of related literature revealed that when consumers develop strong emotional connections with brands, they are deeply committed to them (Fullerton, 2003; Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007; 2008; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) proposed there were antecedents and consequences of commitment. In their model, antecedents were identified as personal characteristics of individuals as well as relationships created between individuals and a brand. In this study, I adopted Pimentel and Reynolds' model to investigate the antecedents and consequences of consumers' commitment to a fashion brand (see Figure 5 for a diagram of the proposed model).

In my review of related literature I documented that highly committed consumers engaged in loyal behaviors as one consequence of commitment. Story and Hess (2006) classified loyalty behaviors into two broad groups: primary and secondary. The loyalty behaviors they classified are similar to some of the self-sustaining consumer behaviors

proposed by Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) as reflective of consumer devotion. Thus, I proposed that committed consumers can develop their devotion to a brand by participation in primary and secondary loyalty behaviors (see Figure 5 for a diagram of the proposed model). Strongly committed fans who intensively engage in these loyalty behaviors may ultimately become devoted consumers.

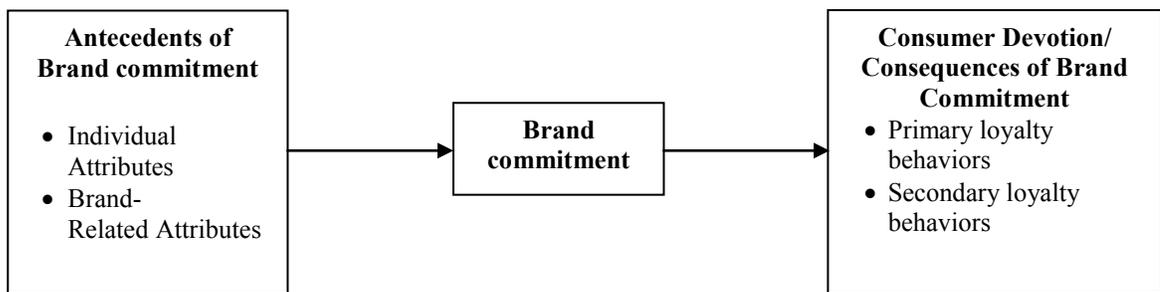


Figure 5. Proposed model.

Development of Hypothesized Relationships

Antecedents of Brand Commitment

To investigate factors related to consumer brand commitment, antecedents of brand commitment were examined based on two perspectives: factors related to personal characteristics and factors related to a brand (see Figure 6 for a diagram of the elaborated proposed model).

Individual attributes. People bring a variety of individual attributes into the shopping environment so there are many characteristics that could be investigated for their impact on commitment. The focus of this proposed study is on needs as a driver of

commitment because needs have been theorized as key to the dedication of fans (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004).

Need to belong. Individuals have an intrinsic psychological drive for affiliation and creating bonds with others (e.g., Bowlby, 1973; Maslow, 1968; McClelland, 1987; Murray, 1938). Individuals feel belongingness to a group or community and acceptance from others through affiliation because they want to avoid social rejection (Leary, 2001). Sports fans sometimes use the words ‘our team’ to express their affiliation with their teams. Sports fans feel social acceptance by becoming a fan of a team that others are fans of, supporting their teams, and interacting with other fans (e.g., Hunt et al., 1999). For individuals who feel a strong need to belong to others, becoming a fan can assist in maintaining the social self. Applying these ideas to a brand, individuals may become a fan of a specific brand because others surrounding them are loyal to the brand and recommend that brand to them. Because they purchase and display brand objects similar to other fans, they may feel a sense of belongingness or community and may feel that they are accepted by others. They can find something in common with others through becoming fans of the brands. Therefore, individuals who feel a strong need to belong may tend to become a brand fan and develop an intense level of brand commitment.

- H1: Need to belong is positively related to brand commitment.

Materialism. Materialism refers to “the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions” (Belk, 1985). Individuals who are materialistic view possessions as an indicator of happiness and success (Moschins & Churchill, 1986). Thus, materialists tend to be brand conscious and interested in purchasing and possessing name brand products (Liao & Wang, 2009; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). They also tend to possess luxury

goods to reinforce and represent their self-esteem (Tatzel, 2002) and improve their social status (Christopher, Marek, & Carroll, 2004). Individuals who are highly materialistic tend to consume goods publicly rather than privately to enhance their status (Richins, 1994). Materialism can be identified as a fan characteristic in various consumption contexts (e.g., sports, game, brands). Devoted fans have a high desire to acquire items related to their fanatic object(s) and often have a collection of items (e.g., Thorne & Bruner, 2006).

Fans can also experience compulsive and addictive-like consumption behaviors associated with their fanatic objects (Chung et al., 2008). Fans also enjoy sharing comments and appreciation of their collection with other fans and tend to enhance their self-concept through these activities. Materialistic people also often spend money wastefully (Mason, 1981), are basically highly interested in spending (Rassuli & Hollander, 1986), and reinforce their self-concept by presenting their purchased goods publicly. Thus, an individual who is materialistic may become a fan of a brand, committed to the brand, and direct their materialistic tendencies at objects carrying that brand .

- H2: Materialism is positively related to brand commitment.

Brand-Related Attributes. In addition to individual attributes, individuals' thoughts concerning and experiences with a brand could also be investigated as a driver of commitment. Relationships built between fans and their object of interest is also a driver of commitment (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). In this study, attributes related to building relationships between individuals and brands was included as another key driver of commitment.

Brand Consciousness. Brand consciousness refers to the mental orientation to choose well known and highly advertised brand-name products (Sproles & Kendall, 1986). Brand conscious individuals use well-known brand products to enhance their social status because brands can convey status and prestige (Wang, 2007). Individuals who are highly conscious about brands are prone to choose brand-name products because they feel familiar with those brands and familiar brands reduce risk when making purchase decisions (Lehmann & Winer, 1997). Individuals who are highly conscious of well-known brands may become a brand fan and exhibit a high level of brand commitment.

- H3: Brand consciousness is positively related to brand commitment.

Brand engagement in self-concept. Researchers have documented that consumers can extend and maintain their sense of self by developing and intensifying emotional relationships with brands (e.g., Fournier, 1998). Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) proposed that commitment to a brand can satisfy internal needs or desires (i.e., inner self) and also meet the expectations of others (i.e., social self). According to their conceptualization, brand commitment can be created in a social or group context (similar to Sutton et al.'s perspectives from sports fan research). Consumers may be committed to a brand because other members of an important group such as family members or peers are fans of the brand.

However, several researchers found that brand commitment can also be created in private and at the individual level (Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2008; Chung et al., 2008). Consumers may be committed to a brand because that brand represents their individual

personality or taste. Thus, if a brand is perceived as providing the benefit of maintaining the inner self and/or social self, consumers will be committed to the brand.

- H4: Perceived self-brand relationship is positively related to brand commitment.

Relationship Investment. Relationship investment refers to an individuals' investment of resources to maintain a relationship with their brands. Sports fans invest their money and efforts to maintain connections to their teams. Dedicated fans invest significant resources. Typically the greater a fan's effort, the greater is a fan's commitment to a team. Similarly, in consumer behavior research, De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, and Iacobucci (2001) found that consumers' perception of how much a retailer invested in resources, effort, and attention to maintain relationships with their customers (in other words, how committed they were to their customers) influenced customers' level of behavioral loyalty and their perceived relationship quality. Researchers also found that consumers would be committed to a brand and stay in the relationship with the brand when the consumers invested a lot of resources (e.g., time and efforts) to maintain the relationship with their brands (e.g., Breivik & Thorbjorsen, 2008; Sung & Choi, 2010). Thus, individuals who invest a great deal in the relationship with their brands exhibit an intense level of brand commitment.

- H5: Relationship investment is positively related to brand commitment.

The Consequences of Commitment to the Brand

Consequences of brand commitment were examined by using loyalty behaviors. Loyalty behaviors were selected because retailers are interested in developing and maintaining loyal customers. Loyalty behaviors have been divided into two dimensions: primary loyalty and secondary loyalty (Story & Hess, 2006). Primary loyalty behaviors

include behavioral loyalty and willingness to pay premium prices for a brand. Secondary loyalty behaviors include consumer advocacy intentions and personal obligations (see figure 4 for a diagram of elaborated proposed model).

Behavioral loyalty. Behavioral loyalty is defined as the purchasing frequency of brand fans and amount of money spent on a brand as compared to the amount of money spent at other brands (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, & Iacobucci, 2001). Thorne and Bruner (2006) found that fans of science fiction and games engaged in a variety of primary loyalty behaviors including spending time reading and gathering information, attending events or conventions, and engaging in internet activities. These fans also had a desire to collect and display the objects of their fascination. In earlier research, Sutton et al. (1997) documented that sports fans attended their teams' games and spent significant amount of money and time supporting their team. Thus, it was predicted that extremely committed consumers of fashion brands will shop their brands frequently, will buy the brand frequently, and spend relatively more money on their favorite brands than other consumers. In other words, they will show high behavioral loyalty.

- H6: Brand commitment is positively related to behavioral loyalty.

Willingness to pay premium prices for a brand. Strong emotional ties developed between committed consumers and their favorite brands directly relate to the brand's sales (Story & Hess, 2006). Truly loyal consumers are willing to pay premium prices for their brands (Assael, 1992; Dick & Basu, 1994; Fullerton, 2003; Gounaris, & Stathakopoulos, 2004; Oliver, 1997; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). For example, it has been documented in sports contexts that loyal fans are insensitive to price and often pay premium prices for tickets to their team's games (Sutton et al., 1999). How much they

need to pay to get tickets is not important to them. What is important to them is whether they can attend, watch, and get involved in the event. Similarly, highly committed fashion brand fans, especially emotionally committed fans, will be less price sensitive. They may be willing to pay more to buy their favorite brands than other brands even though competitors offer less expensive versions.

- H7: Brand commitment is positively related to willingness to pay premium prices for a brand.

Consumer advocacy intention. Consumer advocacy intention was operationalized as both consumer advocacy and intention to create positive word-of-mouth communications. Customers are likely to be advocates as a result of being committed to a brand (e.g., Fullerton, 2003). Fans like to interact with not only fans but also with non-fans to share their knowledge and their appreciation of the objects of their fanaticism (Thorne & Bruner, 2006). As they interact with others, fans become promoters of the objects (e.g., team, celebrity, movie) of their fascination, create positive word-of-mouth, and actively try to recruit others to become fans (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Rozanski et al., 1999). Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) also proposed that affectively committed brand fans would engage in recruiting and promoting behaviors through positive word-of-mouth. They proposed that highly committed fans would bet on their teams as an expression of their loyalty, even though there was a small chance that their team would win.

- H8: Brand commitment is positively related to advocacy intentions.

Personal obligation. Personal obligation was operationalized as consumers' intention to sacrifice and make a pledge for the brand. Committed fans often make

significant sacrifices to support their teams and watch the games (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989). Financial or personal sacrifice does not matter for the extremely committed. Similarly, highly committed brand fans would sacrifice their time and money to obtain their brands. They can drive miles out of their way to shop at their brand. In addition, sports fans highly identified with and emotionally attached to their teams are not concerned about whether their teams lose or win a game (e.g., Hunt et al., 1999). In other words, the teams' performance does not affect their commitment. Similarly, researchers have proposed and documented that affectively committed and/or truly loyal consumers remain loyal regardless of the brand's performance and the marketing attempts made by alternative brands to get them to switch (Assael, 1992; Dick & Basu, 1994; Fullerton, 2009; Gounaris, & Stathakopoulos, 2004; Oliver, 1997; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). Thus, consumers committed to a fashion brand will feel personal obligation toward the brand.

- H9: Brand commitment is positively related to personal obligation.

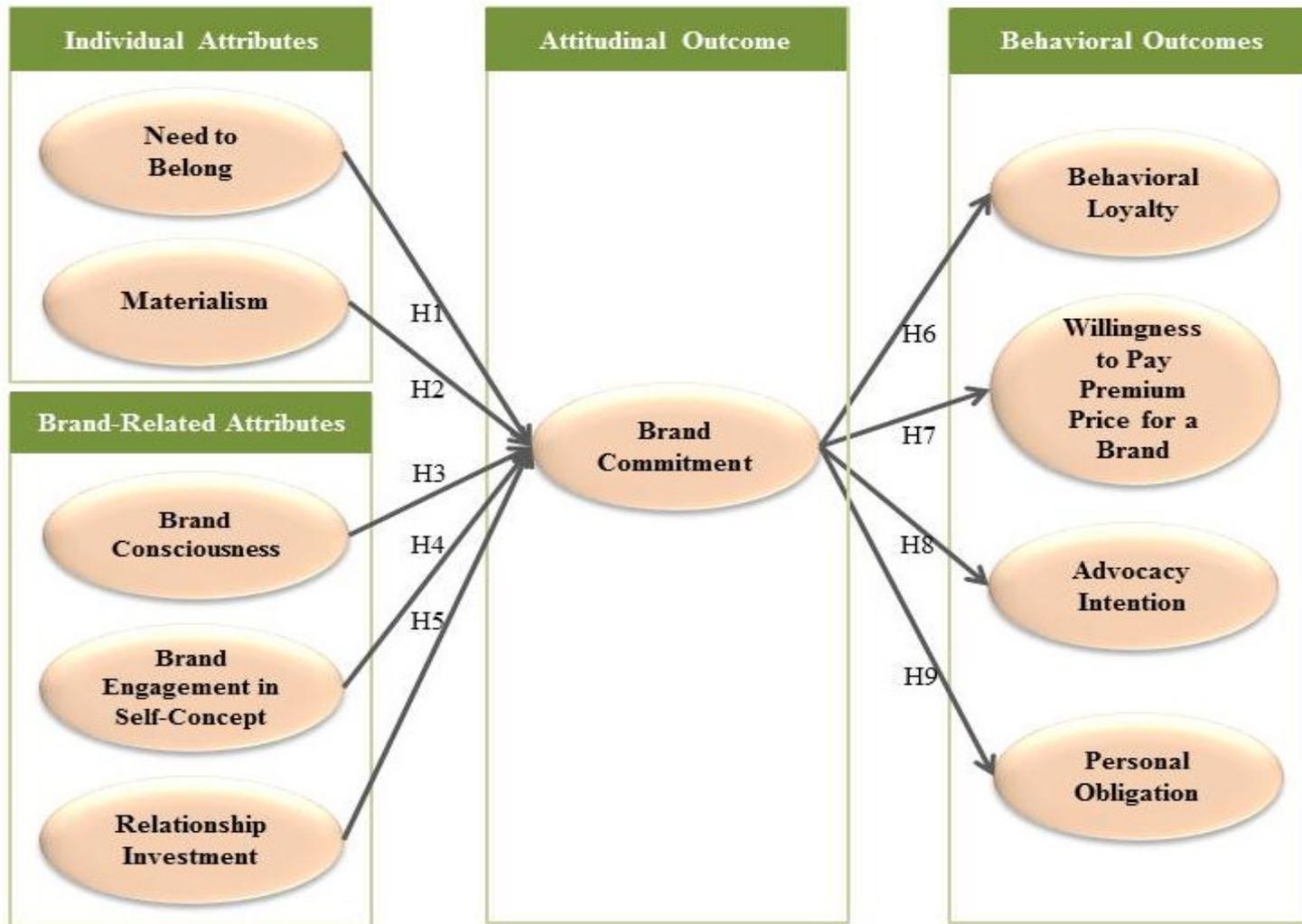


Figure 6. Elaborated proposed model of relationships.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This chapter provides a description of the research methodology. Included are a detailed description of the data collection procedure, the instrumentation, and the data analysis technique used to test the hypothesized relationships.

Research Design

An online self-administered survey methodology was employed to collect the data. The use of online survey is growing considerably in marketing research as adults' internet use is experiencing continued growth in the US (Comley, 2003). Using internet technology to implement survey methodology offers advantages including lower cost, greater speed of response, and wider geographic reach than face-to-face surveys and telephone surveys. In addition, traditional data collection methods including mail surveys and telephone surveys are suffering from decreasing response rates due to the decreasing use of home telephones and the increase in life styles that are not home-based.

Online surveys also offer convenience for the potential participants because they can open the survey and respond to it whenever they want. Online surveys also reduce social desirability biases due to the presence of an interviewer (Duffy, Smith, Terhanian, & Bremer, 2005). Another advantage of online surveys is in the delivery of the actual questionnaires used to collect the data. Online surveys and the technology used to deliver them can make the research visual, flexible, and interactive (Taylor, 2000). Participant responses can be easily exported into an SPSS or excel-friendly format. In addition, missing values can be dealt with when the data is exported. Using an online survey method is an effective way to reach today's busy consumers.

Sampling Frame

The proposed model was tested in a fashion context (e.g., apparel, shoes, accessories, cosmetics) because the brand commitment construct needed to be examined within a heavily and routinely purchased product category (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). The population for this study was defined as fans of a fashion brand. Therefore, individuals who self-identified as fans of a specific fashion brand and had shopped that brand at least once in the past six months were recruited to participate.

Data was collected from panel members obtained from a marketing research company specializing in consumer surveys (i.e., Survey Sampling International-SSI). This company has 924,469 active members in North America (i.e., U.S. and Canada) that vary in age, income, ethnicity, and location. Adult consumers over 18 were the target participants. This research company has ensured an evolution of active members by removing panelists who join the panel but do not respond to a survey invitation in two months or who have responded to a survey at one time but have not responded within the past six months. Concerning accuracy and validity of the panel members' identity, SSI goes through their own validation process when people sign in as panel members.

“Members are welcomed to the panel with a communication that confirms their identity. When people join our SurveySpot panel in North America, quality checks begin with a confirmation of postal address. SSI then addresses the issue of participant authentication to avoid duplicates and misrepresentation in the online survey research process with SSI Verify.™ SSI Verify includes both a best-in-class digital fingerprinting capability from Imperium® called RelevantID and SSI's unique set of proven quality checks. For our SurveySpot US panel, we also can employ an advanced data validation service from Imperium called Verity.™ Verity compares respondent demographics to multiple databases and data vendors specializing in consumer information to confirm key identity data including name, address and date of birth. By implementing this stringent validation process, SSI's respondent data is Verity-certified for accuracy.”

- Addressed in the ESOMAR26 hand book provided by SSI

Data Collection

Potential participants received an e-mail invitation that provided a link to access the online survey. The e-mail invitation contained a generic text (i.e., Your opinions bring change! Your opinions help shape the future. Here's an opportunity for you to make a difference!). Once a participant clicked on the url link to the survey, they landed on an opening page that provided information concerning informed consent. After reading the consent information and clicking a box to indicate their consent to participate, individuals were directed to the research questionnaire. Those who clicked “No” on the consent question were directed out of the questionnaire.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were provided with the definition of ‘brand fan’ and they were asked to indicate to what extent they identified themselves as a fan of their favorite fashion brand (i.e., not really a fan, somewhat a fan, a fan, a big fan, an extreme fan). If participants indicated ‘not really a fan,’ they were also directed out of the questionnaire. Participants were also asked to indicate whether they had shopped the brand they were fans of in the past six months. If a participant indicated ‘No,’ they were exited out of the questionnaire. Next, participants were asked to answer the remaining questions located in the questionnaire. Participants were compensated for their participation through a point system whereby points are credited to participants’ accounts (see Appendix A for a copy of the consent form). Data collection was completed in two days.

Instrument Development

The measurement items of the constructs were developed based on the following procedure: (1) literature search, (2) 1st content validity testing, (3) pilot testing, and (4)

2nd validity testing. First, the measurement items were adopted from existing measures developed by previous researchers. The questionnaire includes a total of ten measures of the constructs: need to belong, materialism, brand engagement in self-concept, brand consciousness, relationship investment, brand commitment, behavioral loyalty, personal obligation, willingness to pay premium for the brand, and advocacy intention. Items for each measure were modified to reflect a fashion brand context. To avoid measurement artifacts, dependent variables (consequences of brand commitment) were presented prior to predictor variables (antecedents of brand commitment) and items using same scale types were interspersed with each other (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

The online questionnaire consisted of five sections. In the first section, several screening questions were presented. As noted earlier, the definition of ‘brand fan’ was provided first. Then if a participant passed that qualifying question, they were asked to think about a specific fashion brand that they were fans of. Participants were asked to indicate the brand name and to identify themselves according to their level of fandom. They were also asked if they had shopped that brand in the past six months.

In the second section, the measures of the consequences of brand commitment were presented. Behavioral loyalty was measured by three items adopted from De Wulf et al. (2001)’s behavioral loyalty measure; 1) What percentage of your total expenditures for fashion items do you spend on this brand? 2) Of the ten times you select a brand to buy, how many times do you select this brand? And 3) How often do you buy this fashion brand compared to other fashion brands when you shop? The first two items were open-ended questions that measured share of wallet and indicated the strength of the relationship between brand and consumer. The third item measured shopping frequency

and indicated relationship depth. Participants responded to the final item using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (very rarely) to 5 (very frequently).

Personal obligation was assessed by three items adopted from Breivik and Thorbjornsen (2008)'s personal commitment measure. The scale items were 1) I will stay with this brand through good times and bad, 2) I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using this brand, and 3) I have made a pledge of sorts to stick with this brand. Participants responded to the three items using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Reported reliabilities for this scale ranged from .61 to .78 (Breivik & Thorbjornsen, 2008).

Willingness to pay premium prices for the brand was measured by three items adopted from Fullerton (2003)'s willingness to pay for a service scale. The scale items were 1) I will continue to purchase this brand if its price increases, 2) I pay a higher price than competitors charge for the benefits I receive from this brand, and 3) I accept higher prices if this brand raises its prices. Participants responded to the three items using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Reported reliabilities for this scale ranged from .73 to .96 (Fullerton, 2003).

The consumer advocacy intention measure was adopted from the five-item loyalty intentions measure developed by Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996). In this measure, three items are concerned with advocacy and intention to provide positive word-of-mouth. These scale items were 1) I say positive things about this brand to other people, 2) I recommend this brand to someone who seeks my advice, and 3) I encourage friends and relatives to purchase this brand. Participants responded to the three items

using 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Reported reliabilities for this scale ranged from .83 to .95 (Fullerton, 2003).

In the third section, the brand commitment measure was presented. The measure of brand commitment was adopted from Allen and Meyer (1990)'s commitment to an organization measure. This measure consists of three sub-scales: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Each sub-scale contains eight items. The scale items for continuance commitment include 1) Right now, staying with this brand is a matter of necessity as much as desire, 2) One of the few serious consequences of switching this brand to others would be the scarcity of available alternatives, and 3) I feel that I have too few options to consider switching this brand. The scale items for normative commitment included 1) One of the major reasons I continue to shop at this brand is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain, 2) I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to the brand, and 3) Things were better in the days when people stayed with one brand for most of their life. The scale items for affective commitment included 1) I would be very happy to spend the rest of my life with this brand, 2) I enjoy discussing this brand with people, and 3) This brand has a great deal of personal meaning for me. Participants responded to the items using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reported reliabilities for these scales were .79 for continuance commitment, .73 for normative commitment, and .85 for affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

In the fourth section, the measures of antecedent constructs of brand commitment were presented. To assess need to belong, the Need to Belong Scale (NTBS) developed

by Leary, Kelly, Cottrell, and Schreindorfer (2001) was adopted. This measure consists of ten items. Sample items include 1) If other people do not seem to accept me, I do not let it bother me, 2) I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me, and 3) I seldom worry about whether other people care about me. Participants were asked to indicate the extent they agreed with each statement using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). The reported reliability was .83 (Pickett, Gardner, & Knowles, 2004).

To assess materialism, a short-form scale of the Material Values Scale (MVS) was employed. This 18 item scale was originally developed by Richins and Dawson (1992). Richins (2004) suggested that short versions of this measure could be feasible measures of materialism (i.e., six-item version, nine-item version, and fifteen-item version). In this study, the nine-item version was adopted. Sample items include 1) I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things, 2) I like to own things that impress people, and 3) The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life. Participants indicated to what extent they agreed with each statement using 5-point likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). Reported reliability was .84 (Richins, 2004).

Brand engagement in self-concept was measured using the Brand engagement in self-concept (BESC) scale developed by Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg (2009). This scale contains eight items concerning participants' general tendency to view important brands as part of their self-concepts. Participants responded to items using 5-point likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). Sample items included 1) Part of me is defined by important brands in my life, 2) I consider my favorite brands

to be a part of myself, and 3) I often feel a personal connection between my brands and me. The scale had a reported reliability of $\alpha = .93$ (Sprott et al., 2009).

To assess brand consciousness, one of the eight subscales of the consumer styles inventory (CSI) (i.e., the brand consciousness measure) developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986) was used. This measure consisted of seven items. Sample items include 1) I prefer buying the best-selling brands, 2) The higher the price of a product, the better its quality, and 3) The most advertised brands are usually very good choices. Participants indicated to what extent they agreed with each statement using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). The reported reliability was .72 (Liao & Wang, 2009).

Relationship investment was measured using four items of the relationship investment measure developed by Breivik and Thorbjornsen (2008). Sample items include 1) I have put a lot of effort into my relationship with this brand and 2) My investment in this brand makes it more difficult to end my relationship with it. Participants indicated to what extent they agreed with each statement using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). The reported reliability ranged from .68 to .70 (Breivik & Thorbjornsen, 2008).

In the last section, participants were asked to provide demographic information to be used to describe their general characteristics. The questions were concerned with gender, age, education, ethnicity, income, marital status, and occupation (see Appendix for a complete copy of the questionnaire).

1st Content Validity Testing

A group of researchers (i.e., two academic researchers and two doctoral students specializing in Apparel Studies, Design, and Education) were involved in qualitatively assessing the content validity of the measurement items. They were provided with a definition of each construct and asked to evaluate each item in terms of clarity, readability, and content validity. Based on the judge's feedback, items were revised. Table 1 presents the outcome of this procedure.

Table 1

1st Content Validity Testing

Construct		Initial Item	Revised Item
Normative Commitment	NC5	...another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organization.	...a better price from alternative brands, I would not feel it was right to leave this brand.
	CC1	...if I quit my job without having another one lined up.	...if I quit shopping at this brand without having an alternative brand.
	CC6	...to consider leaving this organization.	... to consider switching from this brand.
	CC7	...of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.	...of switching from this brand to others is the scarcity of available alternatives.
Affective Commitment	AC2	I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it	I enjoy discussing this brand with people.
	SG4	...to shop online with others as a way to have a bonding experience.	...as a way to have a bonding experience.
	SG3	...to shop online with others having a social occasion.	...as a way to have a social involvement.

Pilot Test

A pilot test was conducted to refine and validate the measurement items. The purpose of the pilot test was to examine whether the measurement items appropriately reflected the theoretical components of the constructs and to eliminate or reword items that did not adequately reflect any of the constructs under investigation. A convenience sample of 153 undergraduate students registered in retail merchandising courses at a mid-western university volunteered to complete an online questionnaire for the purpose of pilot testing the measurement items. The questionnaire took about 15 minutes to complete. Participants received extra credit or course credit for their participation.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted for each of the ten constructs independently to assure unidimensionality within each construct (see Table 2). Reliability and internal consistency of each scale were also examined using Cronbach's alpha. Items with low factor loading (lower than 0.4 suggested by Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998) were carefully examined by the researcher and a decision was made as to whether the item should be reworded or deleted. Using this process, 65 out of 74 items were retained. The following description provides the rationale for reworded or dropped items.

Brand commitment. Three factors in brand commitment construct (i.e., calculative, normative, and affective commitment) were factor analyzed separately to ensure the unidimensionality of each factor in the construct. Exploratory factor analysis of calculative commitment factor showed that the eight items loaded on two factors. Items on the two factors were carefully evaluated if they appropriately reflected the calculative commitment (i.e., CC). It was determined that two items (i.e., CC1: I am

afraid of what might happen if I quit shopping at this brand without having an alternative brand and CC7: One of the few serious consequences of switching from this brand to others is the scarcity of available alternatives) were concerned with the availability of alternative brands. Item CC1 and CC7 were considered to be similar statements to item CC6 (i.e., I feel that I have too few options to consider switching from this brand.). Item CC4 (i.e., It would be costly for me to leave this brand now.) had a factor loading of .38. When eliminating these three items, the remaining five item scale exhibited unidimensionality, acceptable reliability (.80), and an increase in explained variance (52.76% versus 55.26%). Thus, five items were retained for the primary study.

In the normative commitment factor (i.e., NC), two items (i.e., NC2: I believe that a person must always be loyal to one brand, and NC8: I think that wanting to be a 'brand fan' is sensible.) had low factor loadings of .34 and .35 respectively. Removing these items produced a robust, unidimensional six-item scale and an increase in scale reliability from .55 to .72. Thus, items NC2 and NC8 were dropped for the primary study.

Exploratory factor analysis of affective commitment factor (i.e., AC) revealed two factors. Seven items were loaded on the first factor and one item (i.e., AC2: I would be very happy to spend the rest of my life with this brand.) was loaded on the second factor. The single item factor was concerned with the long term commitment that an individual could have toward a brand. The other items were about the individuals' current thoughts about the brand. The single item did not reflect affective commitment in a brand context. Thus, item AC2 was eliminated for the primary study. After eliminating item AC2, the

scale demonstrated unidimensionality and the reliability of the measure was .78. Thus, seven items were retained for the primary study.

Need to belong. Exploratory factor analysis revealed two factors in the construct of need to belong. Item NTB1 (i.e., If other people do not seem to accept me, I do not let it bother me.) exhibited a negative factor loading of $-.75$ and item NTB2 (i.e., Being apart from my friends for long periods of time bothers me.) loaded on both factors. NTB2 had a low factor loading of $.45$ on the first factor and a loading of $.76$ on the other factor. Deleting these two items resulted in an 8 item unidimensional with a reliability of $.88$. Thus, these two items were dropped for the primary study.

Brand consciousness. In the brand consciousness construct, item BC1 (i.e., A product doesn't have to be perfect, or the best, to satisfy me.) had a factor loading of $.38$. Deleting this item produced a robust, unidimensional six-item scale. Reliability of the scale also improved from $.75$ to $.86$. Thus, this item was dropped for the primary study.

Table 2

Pilot test: Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Retained Measures

Construct	Number of Items	Variance Explained	Reliability
Retained			
Need to Belong	8	54.84%	.88
Materialism	9	66.33%	.86
Brand Engagement in Self-Concept	8	71.63%	.94
Brand Consciousness	6	74.48%	.89
Relationship Investment	4	74.48%	.89
Calculative Commitment	5	55.26%	.80
Normative Commitment	6	55.37%	.84
Affective Commitment	7	55.92%	.78
Advocacy Intention	3	65.58%	.73
Behavioral Loyalty	3	67.58%	.72
Willingness to Pay Premium	3	72.61%	.80
Personal Obligation	3	55.94%	.61
Total	65		

2nd Content Validity Testing

Two researchers evaluated the measurement items for clarity and adequacy of item presentation again. Through this process, item NC3 (i.e., Jumping from brand to brand does not seem at all unethical to me) in the normative commitment measure was changed to “Changing from one brand to another brand is unethical to me.” In addition, negative wording of items AC5, AC6, and AC8 in the affective commitment measure were changed to positive wording.

Data Analysis Technique

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses reflected in the model. SEM is a family of statistical techniques incorporating path analysis and factor analysis. SEM enables researchers to test a wide range of hypothesized relationships simultaneously among any combination of observed and latent variables. The result of the analyses provides a researcher with an indication of how well the model of proposed relationships fits the data. The goodness of model fit is assessed with χ^2 tests, the ratios of chi-square to degrees of freedom (*df*), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), the non-normed fit index (NNFI), and the comparative fit index (CFI). In general, satisfactory model fits result when χ^2 tests are not significant, RMSEA and SRMR values are less than or equal to 0.08, and NNFI and CFI values are greater than or equal to 0.90 (Hair et al., 1999).

SEM requires large-sample sizes. Sample sizes between 100 and 200 are considered medium sample sizes and desirable for testing a model. However, the model's complexity is also considered to determine appropriate sample size (Kline, 2011).

Handling Missing Data

Participants can fail to provide complete responses to all measurement items due to several reasons including fatigue from responding to an excessively long questionnaire, refusing to answer certain items, and failing to answer items by mistake. It is important to deal with missing values because incomplete data can result in biased conclusions and misinterpretations. To deal with missing data in this study, an imputation method that replaces the missing values with an estimated value was used. Missing values were replaced with the arithmetic mean of each item.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents a description of the demographic characteristics of the participants in the research. This chapter also contains the results of the primary data analyses conducted to test the hypothesized relationships proposed in Chapter two.

Preliminary Data Analysis

Participant characteristics

A total of 640 individuals were invited to participate in the survey. Among them, 16 participants indicated “No” to the consent question, 168 responses were from participants who indicated they had not shopped the brand they were fans of in the past six months, 4 responses were from the participants who indicated he or she was “not really a fan”, and 14 responses were from the participants who did not indicate a fashion brand as the object of their fan behavior (e.g., retailers, discount stores). Responses from these participants were excluded from the final data set. Questionnaires from 20 individuals were incomplete. Responses from these individuals were also excluded. Thus, the final data set was comprised of responses from 418 individuals.

Participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 82 with a majority of the participants between 26 and 65 years old (75.9%). Slightly more than half of the participants were female (53.4%) and married/living with a partner (57.4%). Most of the participants were Caucasian (79.4%). More than half of the respondents indicated they completed some college (28.8%) or had a four-year college degree (26.7%). Slightly more than half of the participants indicated their income was between \$20,000 and \$60,000 (51%).

A majority of the participants indicated they were a fan of a clothing brand (68.2%), followed by 20.1% that indicated they were a fan of a shoe brand, and 6.9% indicating they were a fan of a cosmetic brand. A majority of the participants indicated that they were a fan of a national brand (89.1%). Over a third of the participants indicated their fan level was big (37.6%) followed by 37.6% indicating they were simply a fan. Slightly more than half of participants indicated they have been a fan of their favorite brand for more than 5 years (58.4%). Detailed information concerning the participants' characteristics can be found in Tables 3 and 4.

Assumption Tests

Two important assumptions associated with SEM are that the data are a continuous scale and have multivariate normal distribution. To test these assumptions, (1) the normality of the data, (2) reliability of the measures, and (3) multicollinearity among variables were assessed. To assess normality of the data, skewness and kurtosis of the data were examined (see Table 5). The value of kurtosis and skewness that is between -3 to 3 indicate univariate normality of each item (Kline, 2011). The skewness values of all items ranged from -1.01 to .79 and the kurtosis values ranged from -1.15 to 1.24, indicating normal distribution of the data. Table 5 presents mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis values of all items.

The reliability of the eleven measures was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) recommend the values of reliability should be .70 or above. The analysis revealed that the alpha values ranged between .68 and .95 indicating that all measures were moderately reliable (see Table 9). Multicollinearity was

assessed by examining the correlation matrix with the eleven constructs to detect any concerns with multicollinearity. As suggested by Kline (2011), correlation over .85 was considered as an indicator that suggests multicollinearity. The correlation values between variables were between .01 and .80 (see Table 6). All measures of the constructs used in this study were included in the main data analysis since the above assumption tests revealed that the measures moderately met the assumptions of SEM analysis.

Table 3

Participants' Demographic Characteristics (N = 418)

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	226	53.4%
	Male	192	45.4%
Age	18-25	65	15.4%
	26-45	167	39.4%
	46-65	154	36.5%
	65+	37	8.7%
	Never Married	109	25.8%
Marital Status	Married/Living with a partner	243	57.4%
	Divorced/Separated	47	11.1%
	Widowed	17	4%
Ethnicity	Caucasian	336	79.4%
	African American	36	8.5%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	18	4.3%
	Hispanic	14	3.3%
	Native American	4	.9%
	Other	7	1.7%
	Education	High School or Less	93
Vocational / Technical School (2 year)		34	8%
Some College		122	28.8%
College Graduate (4 year)		113	26.7%
Master's Degree (MS)		41	9.7%
Doctoral Degree (PhD)		5	1.2%
Professional Degree (MD, JD, etc.)		13	3.1%
Income		Under \$20,000	46
	\$20,000 to \$39,999	117	29.4%
	\$40,000 to \$59,999	86	21.6%
	\$60,000 to \$79,999	56	14%
	\$80,000 to \$99,999	38	9.6%
	Over \$100,000	55	13.8%
Employment	Full-time	179	42.3%
	Part-time	49	11.6%
	Retired	68	16.1%
	Unemployed	107	25.3%

Table 4

Additional Participants' Characteristics

		Frequency	Percent
Product categories identified linked to fan behavior	Clothing	285	68.2%
	Shoes	84	20.1%
	Accessories (e.g., handbags, belts, jewelry, scarves)	19	4.5%
	Cosmetics	29	6.9%
Brand categories identified linked to fan behavior	National brand	367	89.1%
	Designer brand	15	3.6%
	Private brand	19	4.6%
	Other	11	2.7%
Fan identification	Somewhat a fan	42	9.8%
	A fan	152	36.4%
	A big fan	157	37.6%
	An extreme fan	68	16.3%
Length of time spent as a fan	Less than 2 year	54	12.4%
	2-5 years	120	28.7%
	More than 5 years	246	58.9%

Table 5

Assessment of Normality

Construct	Item	Mean	Standard Deviations	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. Need to Belong	NTB2	2.83	1.23	.24	-.93
	NTB3	3.03	1.21	.11	-1.04
	NTB4	3.66	.91	-.51	.24
	NTB5	4.05	.83	-.90	1.24
	NTB6	3.46	1.12	-.41	-.59
	NTB8	3.00	1.20	.07	-.91
	NTB9	2.92	1.14	.14	-.68
	NTB10	3.08	1.10	-.07	-.62
2. Materialism	MA1	3.66	1.10	-.49	-.53
	MA2	3.70	.98	-.56	.05
	MA3	2.97	1.17	.08	-.78
	MA4	3.71	.93	-.51	-.10
	MA5	2.90	1.20	.17	-.77
	MA6	2.98	1.12	.11	-.67
	MA7	3.31	1.12	-.30	-.66
	MA8	3.15	1.10	-.13	-.59
	MA9	3.42	1.15	-.33	-.72
3. Brand Consciousness	BC2	3.07	1.05	-.33	-.47
	BC3	2.61	1.19	.06	-.81
	BC4	2.91	1.14	.34	-.78
	BC5	2.59	1.18	.00	-.69
	BC6	2.80	1.05	.40	-.36
	BC7	3.03	1.01	.24	-.27
	4. Brand Engagement in Self- Concept	BESC1	3.34	1.02	-.45
BESC2		3.19	1.07	-.21	-.51
BESC3		3.16	1.10	-.13	-.68
BESC4		3.22	1.10	-.23	-.61
BESC5		2.90	1.16	.23	-.78
BESC6		3.16	1.09	-.19	-.62
BESC7		3.14	1.12	-.18	-.68
BESC8		3.04	1.15	-.03	-.79
5. Relationship Investment	RI1	2.87	1.08	.26	-.45
	RI2	3.21	1.11	-.19	-.67
	RI3	2.77	1.16	.31	-.65
	RI4	2.76	1.18	.30	-.70

Table 5

Assessment of Normality (Continued.)

Construct	Item	Mean	Standard Deviations	Skewness	Kurtosis
6. Commitment					
Affective Commitment	AC1				
	AC3	2.39	1.17	.69	-.19
	AC4	2.68	.98	.36	-.25
	AC5	2.94	1.14	.00	-.69
	AC6	2.86	1.26	.10	-1.01
	AC7	3.30	1.11	-.21	-.65
	Normative Commitment	AC8	3.34	1.12	-.43
NC1		2.92	1.13	.12	-.61
NC3		2.31	1.21	.75	-.30
NC4		2.94	1.17	.03	-.75
NC5		2.55	1.11	.39	-.48
NC6		3.12	1.04	-.11	-.50
NC7		2.71	1.08	.35	-.32
Calculative Commitment	CC2	2.89	1.20	.15	-.89
	CC3	2.39	1.15	.69	-.26
	CC5	2.88	1.27	.17	-1.02
	CC6	2.91	1.22	.16	-.87
	CC8	2.84	1.32	.12	-1.15
7. Personal Obligation					
	PO1	3.48	1.03	-.21	-.39
	PO2	3.81	.87	-.40	-.12
	PO3	3.50	.98	-.32	-.29
8. Willingness to Pay Premium Prices for a Brand					
	WPM1	3.28	1.07	-.15	-.70
	WPM2	3.43	1.03	-.24	-.47
	WPM3	3.23	1.08	-.15	-.67
9. Behavioral Loyalty					
	BL1	2.76	1.33	.21	-1.09
	BL2	3.45	1.30	-.43	-.92
	BL3	3.88	.92	-.57	.16
10. Advocate Intention					
	AI1	4.39	.70	-1.01	1.06
	AI2	4.25	.72	-.85	.96
	AI3	3.93	.85	-.52	-.06

Table 6

Correlation Matrix for Latent Variables

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Need to Belong	1.00										
2. Need for Uniqueness	.35**	1.00									
3. Materialism	.57**	.40**	1.00								
4. Brand Consciousness	.45**	.45**	.61**	1.00							
5. Brand Engagement in Self-Concept	.38**	.50**	.60**	.57**	1.00						
6. Relationship Investment	.42**	.48**	.54**	.63**	.80**	1.00					
7. Commitment	.35**	.45**	.39**	.49**	.64**	.71**	1.00				
8. Switching Intention	.33**	.26**	.30**	.30**	.08	.09	.01	1.00			
9. Willingness to Pay Premium Prices for a Brand	.16**	.34**	.21**	.39**	.43**	.49**	.63**	.02	1.00		
10. Behavioral Loyalty	.01	.09	.10	.10	.20	.24**	.36**	.17**	.31**	1.00	
11. Advocate Intention	.18**	.25**	.24**	.19**	.38**	.37**	.42**	.11*	.41**	.32**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Final Measures for Data Analysis

As a final step to attain strong measurement items, measure purification was conducted using the primary data. Three different analyses were performed to assure unidimensionality within each construct. First, skewness and kurtosis values of all scale items were examined to identify items with low variances (i.e., high kurtosis) or skewed distributions that could generate problems in subsequent analyses. As shown in table 5, the skewness values of all items ranged from -1.01 to .79 and the kurtosis values ranged from -1.15 to 1.24. All values were in acceptable ranges as suggested by Kline (2011).

Next, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation was conducted on the 78 item set as a whole and for each of the 10 constructs independently. Items cross-loading on two or more factors as well as items with low factor loadings (i.e., lower than 0.4) were carefully examined to determine whether the problematic items should be deleted or not. As a final step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on each of the ten constructs. The construct measurement models were assessed through CFA using maximum likelihood estimation on the item correlation matrices. The magnitude of item error variances, large modification indices (MI), and standardized residuals values were carefully examined. Results from each of the three analysis approaches were considered together to reach the final decision concerning which items to retain and which to delete.

As a result of these analyses, 56 of the original 65 items were retained. The final measures used for the data analysis are presented in Table 8. For the variables need to belong, materialism, and the sub factors of commitment (i.e., calculative, normative, and

affective commitment) significant improvements in fit were observed in comparing χ^2 statistics for models with and without problematic items. Moreover, the fit of all reduced-item set models was satisfactory, with CFI statistics of 0.98 and higher (see Table 7). Descriptive statistics of the final measurement items also provided evidence of the assumption of multivariate normality necessary for structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis (Hair et al., 1998) (see Table 5).

Table 7

Goodness-of-Fit Statistics for Full and Reduced Item Sets

Construct	Number of Items		Full Item Set	Reduced Item Set
	Full	Reduced		
Need to Belong,	8	7	$\chi^2 = 61.71$ $df = 20$ $p = 0.00$ CFI = 0.97	$\chi^2 = 35.62$ $df = 14$ $p = 0.001$ CFI = 0.99
Materialism	9	6	$\chi^2 = 192.48$ $df = 27$ $p = 0.00$ CFI = 0.89	$\chi^2 = 24.57$ $df = 9$ $p = 0.003$ CFI = 0.98

Table 8

Summary of Final Measures

Construct	Measures	Scale
Need to Belong	NTB2: Being apart from my friends for long periods of time bothers me.	5-point scales anchored at "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5= Strongly agree"
	NTB3: I often worry about whether other people care about me.	
	NTB4: I do not like being alone.	
	NTB5: I want other people to accept me.	
	NTB8: My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me.	
	NTB9: It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people's plans.	
	NTB10: I have a strong need to belong.	
Materialism	MA2: The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.	5-point scales anchored at "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5= Strongly agree"
	MA3: I like to own things that impress people.	
	MA5: Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.	
	MA6: I like a lot of luxury in my life.	
	MA7: My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.	
	MA8: I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.	
Brand Consciousness	BC2: I prefer buying the best-selling brands.	5-point scales anchored at "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5= Strongly agree"
	BC3: The higher the price of a product, the better its quality.	
	BC4: Nice department and specialty stores offer me the best products.	
	BC5: The more expensive brands are usually my choices.	
	BC6: The most advertised brands are usually very good choices.	
	BC7: The well-known national brands are best for me.	

Table 8

Summary of Final Measures (Continued)

Construct	Measures	Scale
Brand Engagement in Self-Concept	BESC1: There are links between the brands that I prefer and how I view myself.	5-point scales anchored at "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5= Strongly agree"
	BESC2: My favorite brands are an important indication of who I am.	
	BESC3: I feel as if I have a close personal connection with the brands I most prefer.	
	BESC4: I consider my favorite brands to be a part of myself.	
	BESC5: Part of me is defined by important brands in my life.	
	BESC6: I can identify with important brands in my life.	
	BESC7: I have a special bond with the brands that I like.	
	BESC8: I often feel a personal connection between my brands and me.	
Relationship Investment	RI1: I have put a lot of efforts into my relationship with this brand.	5-point scales anchored at "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5= Strongly agree"
	RI2: I have invested a lot of money in my relationship with this brand.	
	RI3: I have put a lot of emotional investment into my relationship with this brand.	
	RI4: My investment in this brand makes it more difficult to end my relationship with it.	

Table 8

Summary of Final Measures (Continued)

Construct	Measures	Scale
Calculative Commitment	CC2: It would be very hard for me to leave this brand right now, even if I wanted to.	5-point scales anchored at "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5= Strongly agree"
	CC3: Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave this brand now.	
	CC5: Right now, staying with this brand is a matter of necessity as much as desire.	
	CC8: One of the major reasons I continue to shop at this brand is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice- another brand may not match the overall benefits I receive from this brand.	
Normative Commitment	NC1: I think that people these days move from brand to brand too often.	5-point scales anchored at "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5= Strongly agree"
	NC2: I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to one brand.	
	NC3: Jumping from brand to brand does not seem at all unethical to me.	
	NC4: One of the major reasons I continue to shop at this brand is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore, feel a sense of moral obligation to remain.	
	NC7: Things were better in the days when people stayed with one brand for most of their life.	
Affective Commitment	AC5: I feel like 'part of the family' with this brand.	5-point scales anchored at "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5= Strongly agree"
	AC6: I feel 'emotionally attached' to this brand.	
	AC7: This brand has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	
	AC8: I feel a strong sense of belonging to this brand.	

Table 8

Summary of Final Measures (Continued)

Construct	Measures	Scale
Behavioral Loyalty	BL1: What percentage of your total expenditures for fashion items do you spend on this brand? Please enter a number between 0 and 100.	0~100
	BL2: Of the 10 times you select a brand to buy, how many times do you select this brand? Please enter a number between 0 and 10.	0~10
	BL3: How often do you buy this fashion brand compared to other fashion brands when you shop?	5-point scale anchored at "1 = Very Rarely" to "5 = Very Frequently"
Willingness to Pay Premium Prices for a Brand	WPP1: I pay a higher price than competitors charge for the benefits I receive from this brand.	5-point scales anchored at "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5= Strongly agree"
	WPP2: I accept higher prices if this brand raises its prices.	
	WPP3: I will continue to purchase this brand if its price increases.	
Advocacy Intention	AI1: I say positive things about this brand to other people.	5-point scales anchored at "1 = Strongly disagree" to "5= Strongly agree"
	AI2: I recommend this brand to someone who seeks my advice.	
	AI3: I encourage friends and relatives to purchase the products of this brand.	
Personal Obligation	PO1: I will stay with this brand through good times and bad.	5-point scale anchored at "1 = Very Rarely" to "5 = Very Frequently"
	PO2: I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using this brand.	
	PO3: I have made a pledge of sorts stick with this brand.	

Table 9

Reliability of Final Measures

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
Need to Belong	7	.89
Materialism	6	.86
Brand Consciousness	6	.90
Brand Engagement in Self-Concept	8	.95
Relationship Investment	4	.90
Calculative Commitment	4	.86
Normative Commitment	5	.89
Affective Commitment	4	.87
Personal Obligation	3	.70
Willingness to Pay Premium for Brand	3	.83
Behavioral Loyalty	3	.68
Advocate Intention	3	.78

Commitment: Second-Order CFA

Second-order CFA was conducted on the commitment construct since it consisted of three components (i.e., calculative commitment, normative commitment, affective commitment). To ensure discriminant validity and convergent validity, the factor analysis results for each component factor revealed a single factor for each. Cronbach's alpha values were .86 for calculative commitment, .89 for normative commitment, and .87 for affective commitment, demonstrating high reliability for all components. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of three constructs of commitment are presented in Tables 5 and 9.

The second-order factor model was assessed with three first-order factors that explained the higher-order factor commitment illustrated in Figure 7. The results of model assessment (.97 for CFI and .94 for NNFI) indicated a good fit. All first-order and second-order factor loadings were significant, indicating convergent validity ($p < .001$) (see Table 10). Based on these results, an average score was calculated for each participant for each component of commitment (i.e., calculative commitment, normative commitment, affective commitment) and used as indicators of the commitment construct.

Discriminant validity was assessed conducting chi-square difference tests of additional models fixing the correlation between each pair of constructs to 1.0, one pair at a time. A significant chi-square provides evidence of discriminant validity by showing that the correlation between the pair of construct is significantly less than 1.0. (see Table 12).

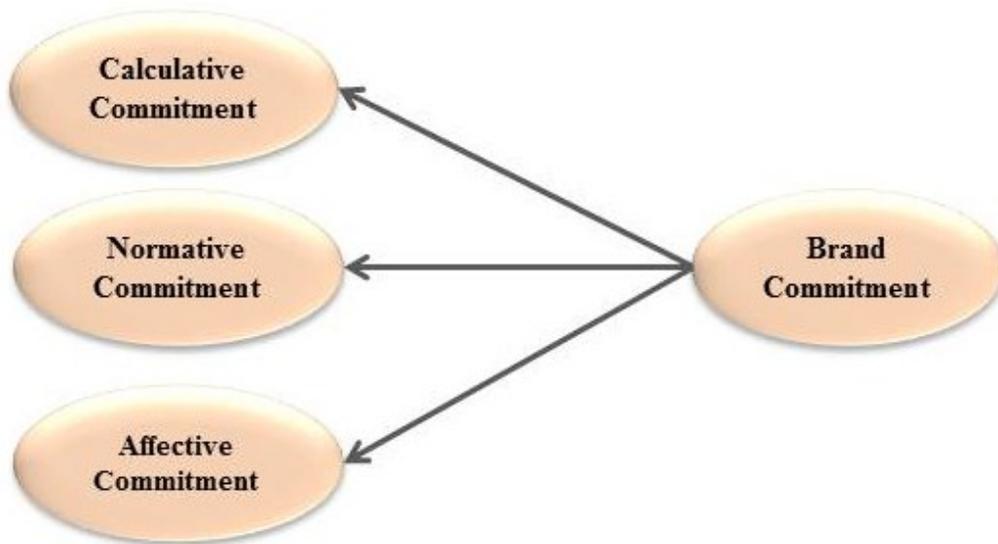


Figure 7. Second-order factor analysis: Commitment

Table 10

Second-Order CFA: Commitment

Construct	Item	Standardized Loading	Composite Reliability	Variance Extracted
Calculative Commitment	CC2	.84	.87	.62
	CC3	.77		
	CC5	.77		
	CC8	.76		
Normative Commitment	NC1	.73	.89	.62
	NC2	.80		
	NC4	.81		
	NC7	.78		
	NC3	.81		
Affective Commitment	AC5	.82	.87	.63
	AC6	.82		
	AC7	.77		
	AC8	.77		

^aComposite Reliability = $(\sum \text{standardized loading})^2 / \{ (\sum \text{standardized loading})^2 + \sum \text{measurement error} \}$

^bVariance Extracted = $\sum (\text{standardized loading})^2 / \{ \sum (\text{standardized loading})^2 + \sum \text{measurement error} \}$

Table 11

Second-Order CFA: Commitment

Path	Loading (t-value)	Error Variance	R ²
CC ← Commitment	0.95 (17.01)***	0.05	.90
NC ← Commitment	0.94 (17.80)***	0.05	.88
AC ← Commitment	0.91 (16.34)***	0.05	.83
Goodness-of-Fit Measure			
χ^2 (df)		186.29 (62)	
χ^2/df		3.01	
CFI		.97	
NNFI		.96	
RMSEA		.07	
SRMR		.03	

Table 12

Chi-square Difference Tests: Sub-constructs of Commitment

Construct Pair	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf)
Calculative Commitment ↔ Normative Commitment	12.74***
Affective Commitment ↔ Normative Commitment	18.58***
Affective Commitment ↔ Calculative Commitment	17.96***

Measurement Model

Prior to estimating the structural model, the measurement model was assessed to evaluate the appropriateness of item indicators. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with maximum likelihood. Initially ten latent variables and a total of 46 indicators were used in the CFA. An overall model fit was evaluated by multiple indices such as χ^2 statistics, the ratios of chi-square to degrees of freedom (*df*), the comparative fit index (CFI), the non-normal fit index (NNFI), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). In general, CFI, NNFI values of .90 or higher and RMSEA and SRMR of .08 or lower indicate a satisfactory model fit (Hair et al, 1998; Kline, 2011).

The results of confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the measurement model had a good fit ($\chi^2 = 1769.26$ with 944 *df*, $\chi^2/df = 1.87$, $p = .00$, CFI = .94, NNFI = .93, SRMR = .045, RMSEA = .046). Then, convergent validity and discriminant validity were assessed. All factor loadings on their corresponding constructs were higher than .57 (see Table 13). As shown in Table 13 and 14, convergent validity was supported by the following: (1) all loadings are significant ($p < .001$), (2) the composite reliability for each construct exceeded the recommended level of .70, and (3) the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct fulfilled or was close to the recommended benchmark of .50 (Hair et al., 1998).

Discriminant validity was assessed by performing χ^2 difference tests for each pair of constructs, a total of 45 tests, adding additional models fixing the correlation between each pair of constructs to unity, one pair at a time. Discriminant validity is indicated

when the results of chi-square difference tests between these models and the measurement model are significant which means that the two constructs in a pair are significantly different constructs (Ping, 1994). The results of χ^2 difference tests for a total of 45 pairs of tests resulted in a significant difference. Having established the convergent and discriminant validity of all measures, the structural model was evaluated to test hypotheses.

Table 13

Measurement Model Evaluation: Standardized Loadings

Construct and Measures	Number of Items	Standardized Loading (min. – max.)
Need to Belong	7	0.58 – 0.86
Materialism	6	0.59 – 0.76
Brand Consciousness	6	0.74 – 0.82
Brand Engagement in Self-Concept	8	0.71 – 0.89
Commitment	3	0.87 – 0.88
Personal Obligation	3	0.60 – 0.72
Behavioral Loyalty	3	0.57 - .081
Willingness to Pay Premium	3	0.72 – 0.88
Advocacy Intention	3	0.72 – 0.77

Table 14

Results: Measurement Model

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Need to Belong	1.00									
2. Materialism	.54	1.00								
3. Brand Consciousness	.45	.64	1.00							
4. Brand Engagement in Self-Concept	.36	.61	.57	1.00						
5. Relationship Investment	.40	.57	.63	.79	1.00					
6. Commitment	.33	.40	.49	.65	.71	1.00				
7. Personal Obligation	.15	.25	.29	.49	.53	.63	1.00			
8. Willingness to Pay Premium	.13	.24	.39	.43	.49	.60	.65	1.00		
9. Behavioral Loyalty	-.02	.09	.10	.20	.24	.35	.34	.31	1.00	
10. Advocacy Intention	.12	.23	.19	.38	.37	.39	.56	.41	.32	1.00
Mean	3.10	3.17	2.83	3.14	2.90	2.84	3.60	3.31	3.36	4.19
SD	.87	.86	.90	.95	.99	.91	.76	.92	.93	.63
Composite Reliability ^a	.89	.86	.90	.95	.90	.90	.70	.84	.70	.78
Variance Extracted ^b	.55	.51	.60	.71	.70	.76	.44	.63	.44	.55

^aComposite Reliability = $(\sum \text{standardized loading})^2 / \{(\sum \text{standardized loading})^2 + \sum \text{measurement error}\}$

^bVariance Extracted = $\sum (\text{standardized loading})^2 / \{\sum (\text{standardized loading})^2 + \sum \text{measurement error}\}$

Structural Model Evaluation

The initial structural model was assessed using the maximum likelihood estimation method. The results from the initial structural model did not show a satisfactory fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 3068.96$ with 980, df , $\chi^2/df = 3.13$, $p = .00$, CFI = .84, NNFI = .83, SRMR = .257, RMSEA = .071). Even though the suggested thresholds for approximate fit indexes should not be used as “golden” rules (Hu & Bentler, 1999), the overall fit statistics for the initial model indicated poor explanatory power of the model. This meant that the initial model did not explain the data well. There could be a more correct model that could fit the data well. Thus, according to Kline’s (2011) recommended steps, it was necessary to respecify the model in a theoretically meaningful way. To respecify the initial model, relationships between the constructs were reexamined based on the literature review and relevant theories. Hypothesized relationships between latent constructs were not tested at this step.

Alternative Model Development

An alternative model was developed based on a thorough review of literature related to the relationships among the constructs included in the model. In particular, it was considered that there could be relationships among the endogenous variables (i.e., need to belong, materialism, brand consciousness, brand engagement in self-concept, and relationship investment) that contribute to commitment construct. In the initial model, these five endogenous variables were proposed to contribute to brand fans’ commitment to a brand independently as suggested by the literature review of ‘fan’ behaviors in various contexts (e.g., consumption, sports). To respecify the model, the relationships that have been documented in consumer behavior research were considered (see Figure 8).

Need to Belong

Individuals have an intrinsic psychological drive for affiliation and creating bonds with others (e.g., Bowlby, 1973; Maslow, 1968; McClelland, 1987; Murray, 1938). Individuals desire belongingness to a group or community and acceptance from others through affiliation because they want to avoid social rejection (Leary, 2001). Sports fans sometimes use the words ‘our team’ to express their affiliation with their teams. Sports fans feel social acceptance by becoming a fan of a team that others are fans of, supporting their teams, and interacting with other fans (e.g., Hunt et al., 1999). Thus, for individuals who feel a strong need to belong to others, becoming a fan can assist in enhancing and maintaining the social self. Applying these ideas to a brand, individuals may become a fan of a specific brand because others surrounding them are loyal to the brand and recommend that brand to them. If they have a strong desire for belongingness to a group or community, they may also enhance and maintain their sense of self through becoming a fan of a brand. Thus, they may connect their self-concept to a brand that others are loyal to. If they are also materialistic and purchase and display brand objects similar to other fans, they may feel a sense of belongingness or community and may feel that they are accepted by others. Therefore, individuals who feel a strong need to belong may become brand fans and develop an intense level of brand commitment because of the acceptance they experience from other brand fans. Based on this reasoning, the following hypotheses were developed.

- H1a-c: Need to belong is positively related to (a) materialism, (b) brand engagement in self-concept, and (c) brand consciousness.

Materialism

Researchers have found that materialists are likely to become brand conscious. Thus, they tend to purchase and possess name brand products to indicate their success (Moschins & Churchill, 1986). Owning specific brands improves perceived social status (Christopher, Marek, & Carroll, 2004; Liao & Wang, 2009; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998) and marketing claims persuade consumers that owning certain brands brings greater happiness than owning other brands. Materialists also use their possession of luxury goods in particular to reinforce and maintain their self-esteem (Tatzel, 2002) through consuming and showing these goods in public (Richins, 1994). Indeed, Sprott et al. (2009) found that there was a positive relationship between materialism and brand engagement in self-concept. Thus, brand fans who are materialistic may be brand aware and connect their sense of self to the brand that is the object of their fandom.

- H2a-b: Materialism is positively related to (a) brand engagement in self-concept, and (b) brand consciousness.

Brand Consciousness

Brand conscious individuals purchase well-known brands as a means of enhancing their social status (Wang, 2007). Because brands serve as a status symbol for these brand conscious individuals and brand conscious individuals associate prestige with the image of a brand (Tai & Tam, 1997), brand conscious individuals can include their favorite brands as a part of their sense of self because the brand can characterize their status, prestige, and life style. In addition, individuals who are highly conscious about brands are likely to purchase well-known brands that convey prestige. Thus, brand conscious individuals may invest significant resources to develop and maintain their

relationships with brands that convey the image they desire. Based on this reasoning, the following hypotheses were developed.

- H3: Brand consciousness is positively related to brand engagement in self-concept.
- H4: Brand consciousness is positively related to relationship investment.

Brand Engagement in Self-Concept

The brand engagement in self-concept construct postulates that individuals vary in their tendency to include important brands as a part of their self-concept (Spratt et al., 2009). Spratt et al. (2009) found that individuals reflecting various levels of brand engagement in self-concept demonstrated different brand-related cognitions (e.g., memory), perceptions (e.g., product preference), and behaviors (e.g., brand loyalty). Similarly, it is possible that individuals who perceive a high level of connection between a brand and themselves would invest resources to maintain a connection to the brand. Sports fans include their teams as a part of their self and put forth effort and resources to maintain a relationship with their teams. Thus, it was expected that brand fans who closely tied their self-concept to a brand would invest significant resources and effort to maintain their brand relationship.

- H5: Brand engagement in self-concept is positively related to relationship investment.

Relationship Investment

The rationale for predicting a relationship between relationship investment and brand commitment remains the same as initially proposed. Researchers working in relationship marketing within a sports fans context have found that individuals invest significant time, money, and effort to maintain their relationships with their relationship

partner (e.g., brand, team, service). As they put effort into their relationship with their relationship partner, they become committed to their relationship partner, in this case, a brand that they are a fan of (e.g., Breivik & Thorbjorsen, 2008; Sung & Choi, 2010). Thus, individuals who invest a great deal in keeping their relationship with their brands will be committed to the brand.

- H6: Relationship investment is positively related to brand commitment.

Outcomes of Brand Commitment

The relationships between commitment and the outcome variables (i.e., behavioral loyalty, willingness to pay premium prices for a brand, advocacy intention, and personal obligation) remained the same in the proposed modified model (see Figure 6). Thus, the following hypotheses were tested again in the modified model.

- H7: Commitment to a brand is positively related to behavioral loyalty.
- H8: Commitment to a brand is positively related to willingness to pay premium prices for a brand.
- H9: Commitment to a brand is positively related to advocacy intention.
- H10: Commitment to a brand is positively related to personal obligation.

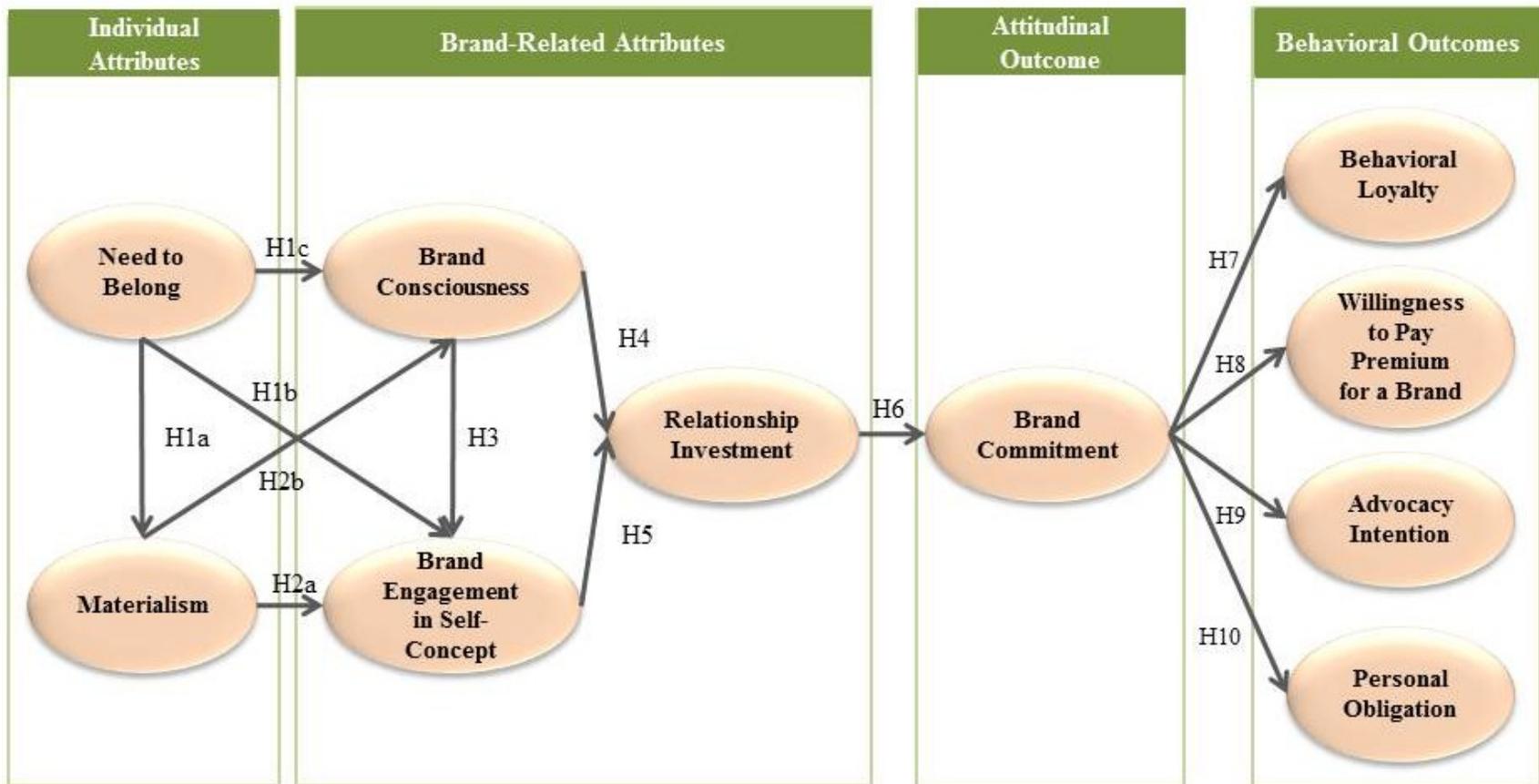


Figure 8. Revised model of proposed relationships.

Structural Model Evaluation of the Modified Model

The modified model was assessed using the maximum likelihood estimation method. Table X presents the results from the modified structural model. The results from the modified structural model exhibited a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 1995.86$ with 976, df , $\chi^2/df = 2.045$, $p = .00$, CFI = .92, NNFI = .92, SRMR = .056, RMSEA = .050). Table 15 indicates that all significant relationships between latent constructs were in the hypothesized direction. Figure 9 illustrates the final model and shows the parameter estimates.

Table 15

Results: Structural Model

Endogenous Constructs		SE ^a	t-value ^b
Materialism			
R ²		.34	
H1a	Need to Belong	.06	9.73***
Brand Engagement in Self-Concept			
R ²		.46	
H2a	Materialism	.07	6.01***
H1b	Need to Belong	.06	-.91***
H3	Brand Consciousness	.07	4.00***
Brand Consciousness			
R ²		.57	
H2b	Materialism	.07	10.24***
H1c	Need to Belong	.06	1.60
Relationship Investment			
R ²		.79	
H4	Brand Consciousness	.04	6.95***
H5	Brand Engagement in Self-Concept	.04	15.20***
Commitment			
R ²		.61	
H6	Relationship Investment	.04	17.71***
Behavioral Loyalty			
R ²		.19	
H7	Commitment	.04	6.39***
Willingness to Pay Premium Prices for a Brand			
R ²		.53	
H8	Commitment	.05	12.63***
Advocacy Intention			
R ²		.30	
H9	Commitment	.04	9.74***
Personal Obligation			
R ²		.74	
H10	Commitment	.05	13.49***
Goodness of Fit Statistics			
N	418		
χ^2 (df)	1995.86***(976)		
χ^2/df	2.05		
CFI	.92		
NNFI	.92		
RMSEA	.050		
SRMR	.056		

^a SE, Standardized estimate ^b * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

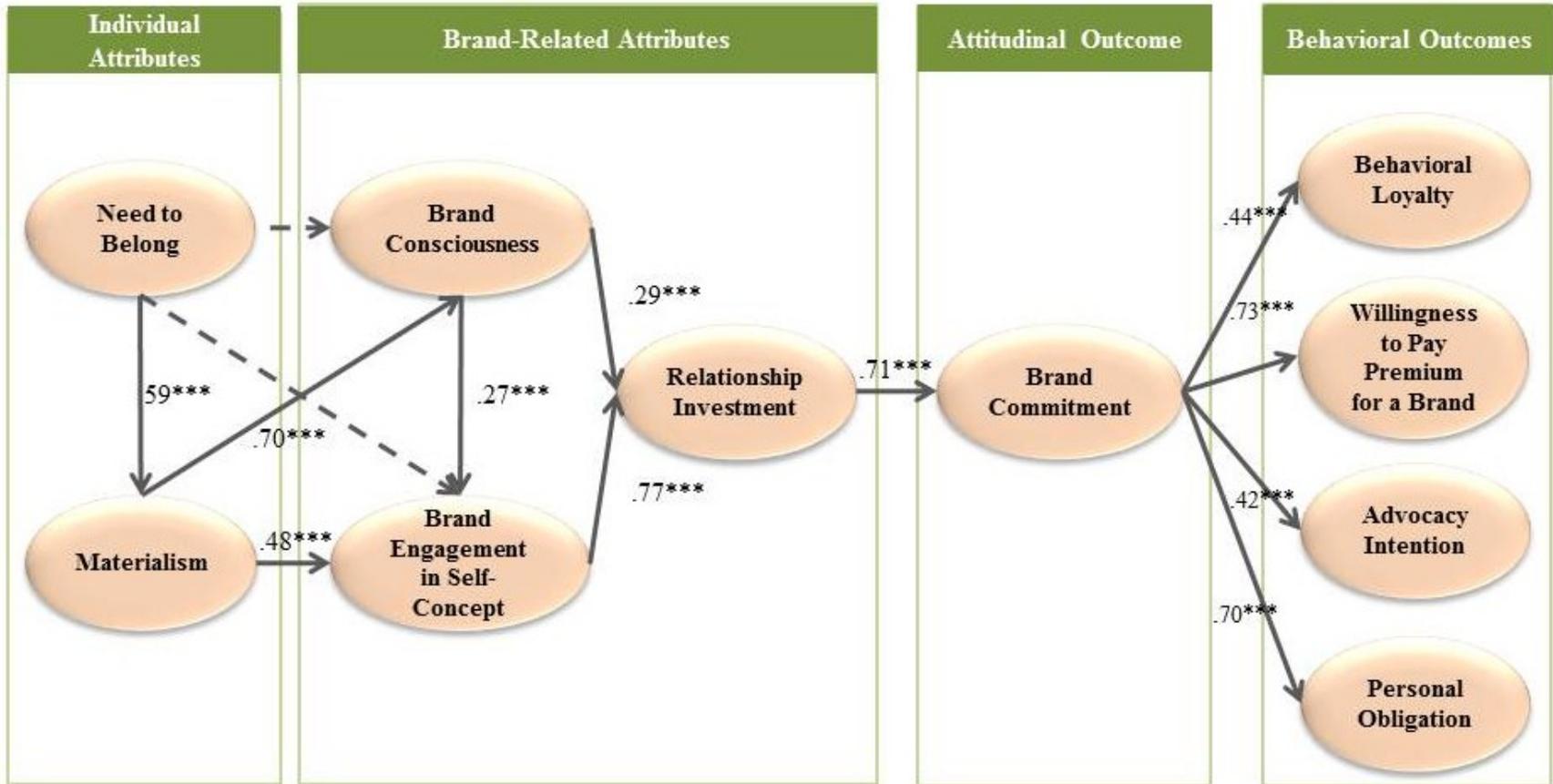


Figure 9. Final model.

Note. All are standardized estimates. *** $p < .001$

$\chi^2 = 1995.86$ with 976 df , $\chi^2/df = 2.05$,
 CFI = .92, NNFI = .92, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .056

—————▶ Significant path
 - - - - -▶ Not significant path

Results of Hypotheses Testing

Effects of Individual Attributes

Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted that psychographic characteristics influenced brand consciousness and brand engagement in self-concept. The results demonstrated that materialism was positively related to brand consciousness ($\beta = .07, t = 10.24, p < .001$) and to brand engagement in self-concept ($\beta = .08, t = 6.01, p < .001$). Need to belong was positively related to materialism ($\beta = .06, t = 9.73, p < .001$). Thus, H1a, H2a, and H2b were supported.

Effects of Brand-Related Attributes

Hypotheses 3 to 5 predicted positive relationships among brand-related attributes. The results showed that both brand consciousness ($\beta = .04, t = 6.95, p < .001$) and brand engagement in self-concept ($\beta = .05, t = 15.20, p < .001$) were both positively related to relationship investment. Brand consciousness was also positively related to brand engagement in self-concept ($\beta = .07, t = 4.00, p < .001$). Thus, H3, H4, and H5 were supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted a positive relationship between relationship investment and brand commitment. The results indicated that relationship investment was positively related to commitment to the brand ($\beta = .04, t = 17.71, p < .001$). Thus, hypothesis 6 was supported.

Effects of Brand Commitment

Hypotheses 7 to 10 were concerned with the relationships between brand commitment and the potential outcomes of commitment. The results showed that brand commitment was positively related to personal obligation ($\beta = .05, t = 13.49, p < .001$),

willingness to pay premium prices for a brand ($\beta = .05, t = 12.63, p < .001$), advocacy intention ($\beta = .04, t = 9.74, p < .001$), and behavioral loyalty ($\beta = .04, t = 6.39, p < .001$). Thus, hypotheses 7, 8, 9, and 10 were all supported. Table 16 presents a summary of the results of hypotheses testing.

Table 16

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses		Results
H1a	Need to belong is positively related to materialism.	Supported
H1b	Need to belong is positively related to brand engagement in self-concept.	Not supported
H1c	Need to belong is positively related to brand consciousness.	Not supported
H2a	Materialism is positively related to brand engagement in self-concept.	Supported
H2b	Materialism is positively related to brand consciousness.	Supported
H3	Brand consciousness is positively related to brand engagement in self-concept.	Supported
H4	Brand engagement in self-concept is positively related to relationship investment.	Supported
H5	Brand consciousness is positively related to relationship investment.	Supported
H6	Relationship investment is positively related to commitment to the brand.	Supported
H7	Commitment to a brand is positively related to personal obligation.	Supported
H8	Commitment to a brand is positively related to willingness to pay premium prices for a brand.	Supported
H9	Commitment to a brand is positively related to advocacy intention.	Supported
H10	Commitment to a brand is positively related to behavioral loyalty.	Supported

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The first section of this chapter provides a discussion of the results. Theoretical implications and practical implications for retailers are then discussed. This is followed by the limitations and suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Results

This study was designed to test a model that proposed antecedents and outcomes of brand commitment and explained the behaviors of brand fans within a fashion context. The model was based on theoretical frameworks and suggested propositions proposed by previous researchers (e.g., Fullerton, 2003; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). Specifically, the research objectives were to investigate 1) whether individual attributes (i.e., need to belong, materialism) and brand-related attributes (i.e., brand consciousness, brand engagement in self-concept, relationship investment) were related to a fan's commitment to a fashion brand, and 2) whether a fan's commitment to a fashion brand was related to behavioral outcomes (i.e., behavioral loyalty, consumer advocacy intention, personal obligation, and willingness to pay premium prices for a brand).

Effects of Individual Attributes

Need to belong. As expected, participants who indicated they had a strong desire for belonging indicated they were also materialistic. This relationship had not been examined by previous researchers, however, this relationship may exist because individuals who desire to belong to or fit in with other people also want to purchase,

collect, and wear fashion brands that are similar to the fashion brands that are worn by the people you desire to fit in with (e.g., Thome & Bruner, 2006).

However, participants who had a strong need for belongingness were not brand conscious individuals. In addition, need to belong was also not related to brand engagement in self-concept. These insignificant relationships may be due to the characteristics of the fashion brands that these participants identified as being fans of. Researchers have found that individuals, who feel a strong need to belong to others, enhance and maintain their sense of self by becoming a brand fan and participating in fan activities (e.g., Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). However, these individuals may only connect their selves to brands that have strong, established brand identities and ones that are congruent with their self-concepts. Many of the fashion brands indicated by participants as the brands they were fans of did not have strong brand identities. Thus, participants may not have developed a connection between their sense of self and a fashion brand that they were a fan of even though they felt a strong need for belonging.

In addition, having brand consciousness means that one is concerned with consumption of well-known brand products that typically convey status and prestige (Sproles & Kendall, 1986; Wang, 2007). However, many of the fashion brands indicated by participants were national brands or private brands with moderate price points rather than being expensive and thereby conveying high status and prestige. Thus, the brands identified by participants as their favorites may not have had the attributes that support a relationship between need to belong and brand consciousness or brand engagement in self-concept.

Another possible explanation for these insignificant relationships may be the fashion context of this research. The construct need to belong may not be associated with enhancing and maintaining a sense of self in a fashion context. In other consumption contexts, participating in fan activities contributes to enhancing consumers' feeling of affiliation to a brand (e.g., sports team, beverage, game). However, due to the relatively short history of fashion brand communities as well as the short history of fan events and activities created by consumers and fashion brands as compared to other consumption contexts, need to belong may not be relevant yet to explain behaviors and attributes of fashion brand fans.

Materialism. Participants who were high in materialism were conscious of fashion brands. This finding supports earlier researchers who also found that materialists were likely to be brand conscious (Liao & Wang, 2009; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). This result is also consistent with previous researchers who argued that materialists tended to purchase and possess specific brands that serve to improve their perceived social status (Christopher, Marek, & Carroll, 2004; Liao & Wang, 2009; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998) and indicate their success in life (Moschins & Churchill, 1986). The finding is also consistent with Tatzel (2002) who reported that materialists purchased luxury goods to reinforce and maintain their self-esteem.

Participants who were high in materialism also strongly agreed that their sense of self was linked to the fashion brand that was the object of their fandom. This finding supports Sprott et al. (2009) who found there was a positive correlation between materialism and brand engagement in self-concept.

The findings concerning the effects of individual attributes should be interpreted in a cautious manner. Although the findings suggest that individual attributes (i.e., need to belong, materialism) are related to brand-related attributes (i.e., brand consciousness, brand engagement in self-concept), they should not be interpreted as the sole antecedents of brand-related attributes. There are other individual attributes (e.g., self-monitoring, personality traits, market maverism) that may also be related to these brand-related attributes.

Effects of Brand-Related Attributes

Participants who were brand conscious also indicated that a fashion brand was an important part of their self-concept and invested resources (e.g., time, effort, money) to keep their relationship with this fashion brand. These findings are not surprising because the construct of brand consciousness is often presented as associated with the idea of self-concept and with possible relationships developed between consumers and brands (Tai & Tam, 1997; Wang, 2007). Brand conscious fans may associate their self with their favorite fashion brands when the brand conveys an image consistent with a status they desire.

Participants also tended to invest resources for a brand to keep their relationships with a fashion brand when they reported a strong connection between a fashion brand and their self-concept. This finding extends the findings of Spratt et al. (2009) who noted that individuals' differing in levels of brand engagement in self-concept were tied to different brand-related outcomes (i.e., cognition, perceptions, and behaviors). In Spratt et al.'s study, only brand loyalty variables (i.e., price sensitivity regarding new product

introductions, time sensitivity regarding a delay in a brand's new product introduction) were examined as brand-related behaviors. Relationship investment could be also included as brand-related behaviors, thus, individuals who define their sense of self using a fashion brand also attribute a greater amount of value to the brand (Kapferer 2008; Keller, 1998) and this leads to increases consumers' investment to maintain their relationship with the brands.

Participants who invested resources in a fashion brand were highly committed to the brand. This finding supports previous researchers' who found that individuals who invested a great deal of resources to maintain a relationship with their brands were dedicated to them (e.g., Breivik & Thorbjorsen, 2008; Sung & Choi, 2010). Thus, this finding provides empirical support that level of investment made by brand fans to maintain a relationship with a brand is a key indicator of level of commitment with high level of investment indicating high level of commitment.

Effects of Brand Commitment

Brand commitment was found to be an antecedent of each of the four behavioral outcomes investigated: behavioral loyalty, willingness to pay premium prices for a brand, advocacy intention, and personal obligation. These findings support previous researchers' findings relating to the behaviors of fans in a variety of contexts that fans tend to collect and display items related to their object of fanaticism, be willing to pay premium prices for tickets to their team's game, spread positive word-of-mouth, and even make sacrifice to support their teams (e.g., Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Rozanski et al., 1999; Sutton et al., 1997; Thorne & Bruner, 2006). These findings also confirm those of previous

researchers' who investigated the role of commitment in relationship marketing (Fullerton, 2003; Story & Hess, 2006) and found that committed consumers were likely to engage in loyalty behaviors such as being advocates for the brand, paying more for a service, and spending a lot of money on the brand.

In addition, the findings provide an empirical support for the model of consumer commitment proposed by Pimentel and Reynolds (2004). These researchers suggested possible behavioral outcomes of affectively committed consumers (i.e., fans) but they did not empirically test them. Committed fashion fans reported engaging in loyalty behaviors including brand supportive activities (i.e., advocate intention, personal obligation) and primary loyalty behaviors (i.e., behavioral loyalty, willingness to pay premium prices for a brand). Among these behavioral outcomes, behavioral loyalty, advocate intention, and willingness to pay premium prices for a brand are very similar to the loyalty behaviors identified as outcomes of commitment in a relationship marketing context (Fullerton, 2003; Story & Hess, 2006). These behaviors are not new in the relationship marketing literature. However, personal obligation was included in the proposed model and characterized as brand fans' proactive sustaining behaviors (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). Deeply committed (i.e., devoted) fans may be willing to make personal sacrifices for their brands. Thus, these devoted fashion fans may be willing to support their brands in any situation regardless of the brand's performance.

Implications

The following subsections present the theoretical and practical implications of this study.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature and theory in the area of both consumer fanaticism and relationship marketing. With regards to the area of consumer fanaticism, previous researchers have provided a foundation to understanding consumer behavior of fans by suggesting the characteristics of these fans and the behaviors that they engaged in (Chung et al., 2008; Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999; Smith, Fisher, & Cole, 2007; Thorne & Bruner, 2006). The findings from their qualitative studies suggested several proposed relationships concerning consumers who are brand fans that had not been empirically tested with a large number of individuals. The foremost contribution of this study to the extant literature is a theoretically grounded model that identifies concepts that are important to explaining how consumers become committed fashion brand fans along with identifying the outcomes of being a committed fashion brand fan.

In addition, this study contributed to the existing research on relationship marketing. Commitment has been considered as a key construct in relationship marketing research. Previous researchers have found several factors (e.g., satisfaction, trust, relationship investment) that lead to commitment (Breivik & Thorbjorsen, 2008; Story & Hess, 2006; Sung & Campbell, 2007). The proposed model used in conducting this research confirmed that relationship investment was an important construct that contributed to brand commitment. In addition, the model identified constructs (i.e.,

individual attributes, brand-related attributes) that contribute to consumers' willingness to invest in brands to maintain their relationships with the brands ultimately resulting in a high level of brand loyalty. Thus, this study also contributes to the loyalty literature by suggesting that scrutinizing the behavior of fashion brand fans can provide methods to develop intense levels of brand loyalty in consumers.

Previous researchers have studied consumer fanaticism in various consumption contexts (e.g., games, movie, sports, music, automobiles). This study contributes specifically to the body of knowledge on consumer fanaticism by testing the applicability of the concept to fashion related products (e.g., clothing, shoes, accessories, and cosmetics) and by proposing a model of fashion brand commitment.

Practical Implications

The findings provide practical implications to retailers and brand management practitioners. Some may argue that the power of brands has declined and brands may not play as much of an integral part in determining or shaping purchase decisions as they once did. Consumers are increasingly price sensitive, perhaps as a result of the current economic climate within the U.S., and have limited loyalty toward with specific brands. However, the proposed model provides one explanation for how personal attributes and brand-related attributes were related and how they contributed to consumers' brand commitment. Consumers' efforts directed toward maintaining a relationship with a fashion brand was a key attribute that predicted brand commitment. Although, personal attributes of consumers are outside the control of retailers and brand managers, they can exert an influence on consumer-brand relationships. Retailers aspire to have loyal

consumers, however, it is becoming harder and harder for them to attain and uphold truly loyal consumers based solely on their decision concerning their marketing mix (i.e., product, price, promotion, place). Spending large amounts of money on advertising might not be an effective way to garner and keep consumers loyalty. Retail practitioners may want to focus spending on customer relationship management programs. For example, an increasing number of retailers are creating communities for their brands and encouraging their customers to actively participate in brand-related activities such as participating in member events and sharing product reviews.

Through participation in brand-related activities, customers may see themselves as reflected in the fashion brand, be willing to invest significant resources in that brand, and desire to maintain a relationship with that brand to the extent that they may demonstrate high levels of loyalty. In addition, retailers may want to create unique brand identities or brand cultures that can facilitate their customers connecting their selves to the brand. Brands such as Apple, IKEA, Coke, and Harley-Davidson create exclusive fan-only experiences. These experiences contribute to building very loyal customers who through these experiences tie positive emotions to the brands as well as view the brand as similar to or even a part of themselves.

In addition, committed brand fans were found to be advocates for the brands that they were fans of. This finding also has an implication to retailers and brand managers concerning how to convert consumers who are not committed to a brand. These committed consumers may exert influence on other consumers who are not really a brand fan by spreading positive word of mouth and supporting their favorite brand. Especially

with the significant growth in the use of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest) and its power on communications, retailers and brand managers may want to encourage their committed fans to post positive reviews about the brand and be an advocate for the brand through their social media pages.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations that could be addressed in future research. The proposed model was developed and tested based on theory and proposed relationships made by previous researchers. However, the findings cannot be simply generalized to other consumption contexts. This study was conducted in the context of fashion products (i.e., clothing, shoes, accessories, and cosmetics). Future research could be conducted with a range of products that vary in terms of their attributes such as price, prestige, usability, or symbolic meaning so that the proposed model can be validated and modified as needed. For example, the proposed model could be applied to other contexts such as luxury goods, automobiles, electronics, or experiences (e.g., travel, events).

Participants of this study were panel members from a marketing survey company who self-identified as a fan of a fashion brand. Participants' self-rating of their intensity of fandom (i.e., a somewhat a fan, a fan, a big fan, an extreme fan) might be a subjective and unreliable measure to accurately assess their level of fan identification. Future research could be directed at developing additional objective measures to assess level of fandom.

Need to belong did not reveal significant relationships with brand consciousness and brand engagement in self-concept which was inconsistent with the expectations. This

non- significant finding might have been due to the attributes of the brands indicated by the participants that did not have strong brand identities. Based on the understanding that fans tend to be affiliated with other fans and participate in the group activities in order to get information, exchange their knowledge, and support the object of their fandom, the model could be tested utilizing individuals who are members of brand communities that create unique fan cultures (e.g., Harley owners group, Apple users group). Members of a brand community develop a close relationship with brands and are highly involved consumers (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Investigating members of brand communities may better capture the phenomenon of brand fanaticism. Thus, future research could be designed to test the proposed model with members of brand communities.

Antecedents and consequences of brand commitment were examined in this study. It is necessary to continue to conduct investigations of other variables such as personality traits, market mavernism, perceived benefits, and brand experience as antecedents of brand commitment. The more retailers know about variables that contribute to brand commitment, the more they can develop effective strategies to maintain long-term and strong relationships with their consumers. Other relationships could also be investigated within the model. For example, factors moderating the relationship between relationship investment and brand commitment could be examined. Individual demographic characteristics such as gender and age could be studied as these are fundamental but important variables used to profile customers by many retailers and brand managers. Individual differences variables such as brand knowledge and self-construal (i.e., interdependent self-construal, independent self-construal) could be investigated as

moderators because individuals with different characteristics might have different levels of relationship strength. For example, for individuals who are interdependent group membership and the relationships with others within the context of a group is important to defining themselves, while those who are independent define themselves based on their unique attributes that differentiate themselves from others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, the relationships between need to belong and brand engagement in self-concept might be stronger for individuals who are interdependent compared to those who are independent.

In addition, comparison of different cultures can be another possible direction for future research. The sample for this study was U.S. consumers. Thus, the proposed model could be limited to reflecting fans' behaviors in individualistic cultures. Comparison of Western cultures and Eastern cultures may be valuable as retailers continue to expand their brands across the globe. For example, in collectivistic cultures individuals tend to be influenced by group memberships and relationships. Thus, relationship ties developed between brands and customers might be stronger and more important to the future of a brand than in individualistic cultures.

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APPENDIX

Consent form and Questionnaire

FASHION BRAND SHOPPING RESEARCH

Thank you in advance for your participation. This study is concerned with your shopping behavior for fashion product categories (apparel, shoes, and accessories). You were selected as a possible participant because you were a general consumer in the U.S. The purpose of this study is to identify influences on your shopping behaviors. Please read this form before agreeing to be in the study. This study is conducted by Hae Won Wu, a doctoral student in the Department of Design, Housing, and Apparel at University of Minnesota.

The records of this study will be kept private. All information you provide in this survey will remain completely confidential. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Your participation is completely voluntary and greatly appreciated. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

In the following sections, you will be asked to complete several questionnaire sets about your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward a specific fashion brand you like and shop. Please take the time to answer these questions thoughtfully and accurately. It takes about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The lead researcher conducting this study is Hae Won Ju. If you have questions you may contact me using email or the following telephone number respectively (612) 624-9308, juxxx010@umn.edu. You can print the consent form for your records.

Do you agree to participate in this research?

- Yes
- No

Section I

In this survey, the term “brand fan” is defined as “individuals who overwhelmingly like a particular brand.”

Please take a moment to think about all the different fashion brands you have visited and pick **THE ONE FASHION BRAND** that you are a fan. Fashion brands include apparel, shoes, accessories, and cosmetic brands.

1. Please indicate the name of that brand. _____
2. Identify the product category most closely associated with this brand.
 - Clothing
 - Shoes
 - Accessories (e.g., handbags, belts, jewelry, scarves)
 - cosmetics
3. Have you shopped at the above brand in the past three months?
 - Yes
 - No
4. How would you describe yourself as a ‘brand fan?’
 - Not a fan
 - Somewhat a fan
 - A fan
 - A big fan
 - An extreme fan
5. How long have you been a fan of this brand?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1 to 2 years
 - 3 to 4 years
 - 4 to 5 years
 - More than 5 years
6. What percentage of your total expenditures for fashion items do you spend on this brand? *Please enter a number between 0 and 100.*

7. Of the 10 times you select a brand to buy, how many times do you select this brand? *Please enter a number between 0 and 10.*

8. How often do you buy this fashion brand compared to other fashion brands when you shop?
- Very rarely
 - Rarely
 - Occasionally
 - Frequently
 - Very frequently

Section II

The following questions are concerned with your behaviors toward the fashion brand that you are a fan. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I say positive things about this brand to other people	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I recommend this brand to someone who seeks my advice	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I encourage friends and relatives to purchase the products at this brand	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I will stay with this brand through good times and bad	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using this brand	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I have made a pledge of sorts stick with this brand	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I will continue to purchase this brand if its price increases	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I pay a higher price than competitors charge for the benefits I receive from this brand	<input type="radio"/>				
9. I accept higher prices if this brand raises its prices	<input type="radio"/>				

Section III

The following questions are concerned with your feelings and thoughts about the fashion brand you are a fan. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit shopping at this brand without having alternative brand	<input type="radio"/>				
2. It would be very hard for me to leave this brand right now, even if I wanted to	<input type="radio"/>				
3. Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave this brand now	<input type="radio"/>				
4. It would not be too costly for me to leave this brand now	<input type="radio"/>				
5. Right now, staying with this brand is a matter of necessity as much as desire	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I feel that I have too few options to consider switching this brand	<input type="radio"/>				
7. One of the few serious consequences of switching this brand to others would be the scarcity of available alternatives	<input type="radio"/>				
8. One of the major reasons I continue to shop at this brand is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice-another brand may not match the overall benefits I receive from this brand	<input type="radio"/>				
	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
9. I think that people these days move from brand to brand too often	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to one brand	<input type="radio"/>				

Section IV

The following questions are concerned with your personal characteristics. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. If other people do not seem to accept me, I do not let it bother me	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I seldom worry about whether other people care about me	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I want other people to accept me	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I do not like being alone	<input type="radio"/>				
7. Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I have a strong need to belong	<input type="radio"/>				
9. It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people's plans	<input type="radio"/>				
10. My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me	<input type="radio"/>				

The following questions are concerned with your personal characteristics. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I like to own things that impress people.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.	<input type="radio"/>				

5. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I like a lot of luxury in my life.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.	<input type="radio"/>				

The following questions are concerned with your perceptions about the fashion brand you are a fan. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. There are links between the brands that I prefer and how I view myself.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. My favorite brands are an important indication of who I am.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I feel as if I have a close personal connection with the brands I most prefer	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I consider my favorite brands to be a part of myself.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. Part of me is defined by important brands in my life.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I can identify with important brands in my life.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I have a special bond with the brands that I like.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I often feel a personal connection between my brands and me.	<input type="radio"/>				

The following questions are concerned with your beliefs about brand. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I prefer buying the best-selling brands.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. The higher the price of a product, the better its quality.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. Nice department and specialty stores offer me the best products.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. The more expensive brands are usually my choices.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. The most advertised brands are usually very good choices.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. The well-known national brands are best for me.	<input type="radio"/>				

The following questions are concerned with your relationship with the brand you are fan of. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I have put a lot of efforts into my relationship with this brand.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I have invested a lot of money in my relationship with this brand.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I have put a lot of emotional investment into my relationship with this brand.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. My investment in this brand makes it more difficult to end my relationship with it.	<input type="radio"/>				

Section V

The following questions are concerned with information about you. Please answer the following questions as they describe you.

1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

2. What is your age?

3. What is your marital status (Please check one).

- Married / Living with partner
- Divorced / Separated
- Never Married
- Widowed

4. What is your ethnicity?

- Caucasian
- African-American
- Hispanic
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Other:

5. Please indicate the highest level of education completed.

- High School or Less
- Vocational / Technical School (2 year)
- Some College
- College Graduate (4 year)
- Master's Degree (MS)
- Doctoral Degree (PhD)
- Professional Degree (MD, JD, etc.)
- Other:

6. Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

7. What is your annual household income (before taxes)?

- Under \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$29,999
- \$30,000 to \$39,999
- \$40,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$59,999
- \$60,000 to \$69,999
- \$70,000 to \$79,999
- \$80,000 to \$89,999
- \$90,000 to \$99,999
- Over \$100,000

8. Which of the following categories best describes your job?

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Retired
- Unemployed